

WRITING NAMIBIA

LITERATURE IN TRANSITION

EDITED BY
SARALA KRISHNAMURTHY
AND
HELEN VALE



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Writing Namibia

Literature in Transition

edited by

Sarala Krishnamurthy and Helen Vale



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University of Namibia Press
www.unam.edu.na/unam-press
unampress@unam.na
Private Bag 13301
Windhoek
Namibia

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Chapter 18 originally published in Van Vuuren, H. (2016). *A Necklace of Springbok Ears – /Xam Orality and South African Literature*. Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA. Re-printed with permission.

Images in Chapter 19 first published in Cwi, T., & Jones, K. (2014). *Jul'hoan Da'abi!oa Nkomtiasis Kokxuisi ǀXanua, Jul'hoan prentewoordeboek vir kinders, Jul'hoan children's picture dictionary*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. Re-printed with permission.

First published: 2018
Cover design: Nambowa Malua
Design and layout: Vivien Barnes, Handmade Communications
Printed by: John Meinert Printers, Windhoek

ISBN 978-99916-42-33-8

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Distribution

In Namibia by Namibia Book Market: www.namibiabooks.com

Internationally by the African Books Collective: www.africanbookscollective.com

Dedication

To our students at the University of Namibia and the
Namibia University of Science and Technology (past and present),
for all that they have taught us over the years.

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Foreword

André du Pisani

This anthology on Namibian writing in the post-colony represents a substantial contribution to the literary archive and culture. For the first time, this edited volume engages with literature in English, Afrikaans, German and the indigenous African languages. By engaging with all genres – novels, short stories, the performing arts, film, autobiography, prose and children's literature – the volume breaks new ground. This multiplicity, however, poses a difficult hurdle because it carries with it a sense of ambivalence and complexity. The problem with embracing differences lies in its concomitant sense of unease.

While the act of writing is indicative of the writer's or performer's perspectives on how they see their world and how they exist within it, humanity began before words, and will end beyond them. The recognition of place and language, too, can function as a self-reflective space, affirming the self, rather than as a revelation of the self and the other, and lead to a richer, more insightful exploration of literary culture. Anthologies such as this should attempt to overcome this innate tension. This challenge is compounded by the fact that perceptions of difference are by no means limited to considerations of geography, since these percolate through filters of identity, gender, language, race, class, sexuality, or religion. The relationship between literature and terrain remains complex, and this volume maps some of these complexities.

As Ben Okri, Booker Prize-winning author, laments, 'our days are poisoned with too many words. Words said and not meant. Words said and meant. Words divorced from feeling. Wounding words. Words that conceal. Words that reduce. Dead words.'¹

To its credit, this volume employs a broad understanding of the construct of 'writing' – extending it to narratives in film, the archives, oral literature and publishing. Mindful that the majority of the contributors are academics, much of the text has naturally been infused by various theoretical approaches – among these post-colonialism, subaltern studies, socio-linguistics and cognitive stylistics. At least one of the contributors poses the meta-question: Why does one write? While not making any attempt at providing a complete answer to the question – is it possible to do so? – the act of writing can offer a meditative space on life, the

¹ Ben Okri, (1998). *A Way of Being Free*, 'Beyond Words', London, Phoenix, p. 88.

human condition, on history and so forth. Writing connects the self and the 'other', and like art, literature and acting, more generally, has the potential for preserving and presenting richly storied experiences.

Structurally, the architecture of the anthology provides the setting and context to writing in the post-colony. This is done against the background of the wounding of the souls of people by colonialism, for the language of colonialism has had an earthly gravity about it and it has indeed been difficult for the victims to escape this. Yet, we have to escape words and enter into a higher realm, which is based on the simple fact of our indivisible humanity and our common future. Informed by this diverse undercarriage, the collection engages reflectively with writing in English with reference to poetry, drama, prose and autobiography. Some chapters take a more eclectic turn and have a more random spirit with a diversity of voices and themes, which is the source of both its weakness and its strength. Of the themes, the social and the political dominate, linking post-colonial Namibian literature to a wider body of work that permeates much of contemporary African literature. Under this rubric, there are specific seams which have been mined, such as the exile condition and home-coming, gender, nationalism and identity politics and the advent of disillusionment with political and socio-economic conditions in the post-colony. The living presence of history and how it distorts the human condition in an independent Namibia, provides a transversal theme which snakes through a number of chapters and genres.

The critical reader will undoubtedly recognise the different 'silences' in both pre- and post-independent Namibian literature, and, indeed, how specific writers and poets invest such silences with a presence, often linking conditions of exile and home, longing, desperation, and a search for meaning. Another theme is that of female agency and how literature brings it to life and invests it with a meaning which emancipates. As several contributions to this volume show, female agency cannot be reduced to being oppositional to patriarchy only, rather it takes many forms and travels many roads, some of which have been quite uncharted.

The poetic register, too, features with insights which are culled from the work of a number of Namibian poets as they strive to promote the poetic cause and wrestle with the economy of words, to engage the complexities and contradictions of a society in transition. Performance poetry receives due attention, mostly as a leveller which connects across class, ethnic and racial divides.

This well-crafted volume contains many of the contributors' insights about the importance of writing as an innate creative human act. The late Nadine Gordimer called writing and literature, 'the bread of the heart'. Reading this volume, one can appreciate why this is so.

Dedicated to their former students, and informed by a series of perspectives, the volume will interest students, teachers and researchers in the field of African literature. It will also be of great interest to the wider reading public.

Professor André du Pisani

Emeritus Professor at the University of Namibia

Member of the *Association des Membres de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques*

Acknowledgements

This book has been in the making for some years and we would like to thank all our contributors warmly, for their chapters, professionalism and patience. Professor André du Pisani is gratefully acknowledged for kindly agreeing to write the foreword for our book. This book would not have seen the light of day, but for the kind support and attention which we received from UNAM Press, in particular, from Jane Katjavivi, Jill Kinahan and Mutaleni Nadimi. NUST student interns, Erasmus Awaseb and Suoma Uupindi, have provided editorial assistance and have to be appreciated for their hard work.

Introduction: Setting the context

Sarala Krishnamurthy and Helen Vale

INTRODUCTION

Looking forward into the twenty-first century, I think we have the right to assess what we have come through. Being here; the particular time and place that has been twentieth-century Africa. This has been a position with particular implications for literature; we have lived and worked through fearful epochs. Inevitably the struggle against colonialism and, latterly, neo-colonialism and corruption in post-colonial societies, has been engagement – political engagement. (Gordimer, 2000, p. 31)

This volume has been a labour of love over several years. We thank the authors for their patience in trusting us to bring the book to fruition. It aims to fill, partially at least, what we perceive as a huge gap in the literature on Namibian writing since national independence. The book with 23 chapters (including this introductory one) was written by experts in their fields, and is diverse and wide-ranging. It covers literature in Afrikaans, English, German, Jul'hoansi, Oshiwambo and Otjiherero. It also touches on different genres: novels, short stories, dramas, autobiographies and poetry, as well as children's literature. The term 'writing' has been interpreted widely to include the narrative form in film, the archives, oral literature, and language policy. Various theoretical perspectives, (from post-colonialism and subaltern studies to linguistics and cognitive stylistics) are used by the authors in their analyses.

In this introductory chapter, we explore the nature of transition, the factors which support a vibrant culture of writing (and reading), and themes in Namibian literature pre- and post-independence, and link these to cross-cutting issues which emerge from the different chapters.

THE NATURE OF TRANSITION

Societies are in constant transition as they reproduce (and modify themselves). The intensity of the transition may change, and the official beginning as well as the formal end of colonial occupation and foreign rule – in as much as political power is first installed by a centralised and externally imposed apparatus and then transferred to a local agency – are the most obvious points of reference or departure for the new chapters and stages in history, leaving the old often only partially left behind. (Melber, 2014, p. xiv)

All societies go through times of transition and transformation, and Namibia is no exception. After more than one hundred years of oppressive foreign rule, first under German colonialism (1884–1915) and then under the South African Administration (1915–1990), Namibia, which was formerly known as South West Africa, gained her independence on 21 March 1990 following a protracted liberation struggle.

The literature which emerged from these turbulent times reflects the very nature of the period. Literature does not exist in a vacuum but reflects its social, historical, political, economic and cultural milieu and also documents change.

Story-telling and the fashioning of narratives is at the heart of all creative writing in any language and in any genre. McGregor and Nuttall (2007) succinctly describe what is useful when considering the nature of the change in a story from before to after independence:

The kinds of stories that dominated the late apartheid period were tales of exile, struggle, community, and resistance – fundamentally political narrative. The individual, in most of the stories, was either a hero or a traitor. Despite their complexity and range, these narratives depicted a world divided into good and evil. The aftermath of apartheid brought an explosion of stories of trauma, within a broader horizon of hope. There the storyteller was a witness, and the timescape dealt with was the immediate past. (McGregor & Nuttall, 2007, p. 9)

This perspective which was related to South Africa, could have applied equally well to Namibian literature. It should be remembered firstly that Namibia gained its independence four years ahead of South Africa. All genres, particularly those of autobiography and poetry, demonstrate this element of trauma. Secondly, Namibia, unlike South Africa, did not have a Truth and Reconciliation Commission which functioned as a sharply focused microcosm of the broader South African society in transition. Old wounds, therefore, still fester more than 27 years after independence concerning, for example, those who disappeared in the SWAPO dungeons of Lubango in the 1980s (Groth, 1995). Without a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to harness and redress grievances, Namibia has seen an explosion in the popularity of autobiography or life writing, which has proved to generate works of catharsis, in

presenting the perspectives of the victims and giving them an opportunity to explore questions of identity and of belonging which become voyages of personal discovery.

In the first chapter of this book, *The shifting grounds of emancipation: From the anti-colonial struggle to a critique of post-colonial society*, Henning Melber discusses the issues of post-colonialism with a view to setting the context for Namibian literature. His chapter offers an insight into a literature which has been drawn from the meaning and content of an emancipation and solidarity during the days of the anti-colonial struggle, to the critical reflections regarding the limits to freedom under a liberation movement as a government. His chapter is sweeping in scope and, as well as relevant, touches on such transitions within Namibian studies.

FACTORS THAT SUPPORT WRITERS AND WRITING

One needs to think about the ideological, material and social conditions under which writers can flourish and have a readership. 'Many factors influence "the writer's act" of transforming literature in response to a new era' (Gordimer, 2000, p. 33). Listed below are six key factors which enhance or impede literary creativity. We shall refer to key points from several of the chapters where they relate to these factors.

Freedom of expression and lack of censorship

Under Article 21 (a) of the Namibian Constitution, 'all persons shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression which shall include the freedom of the press and other media' (p. 14). This factor has provided a major positive contribution to the literary output in Namibia.

Education

'A literary culture cannot be created by writers without readers. There are no readers without education.' (Gordimer, 2000, p. 34)

Education had been sorely neglected during the hundred years of Namibia's double dose of oppressive rule, first, under German colonialism and then, under the South African apartheid system.

On 21 March 1990, when the South African flag came down and the Namibian one was raised, the people of Namibia began the first stage of a long journey. The newly elected Government of Namibia was faced with the task of establishing government structures, appointing a new cadre of civil servants and setting about the task of unifying the 11 administrations that had been established by the South Africans. Also on its list of things to do, was the creation of an educational system, including a university that reflected the needs and aspirations of the Namibian people. (Katjavivi, 1995, p. 57)

In Chapter 22, *Books, words and truth in Namibia: The contribution of New Namibia Books (1990–2005)*, Jane Katjavivi explains that when the liberation struggle

culminated in independence in 1990, widespread changes to the education system required new textbooks and this encouraged a local book production. In the new political climate, Namibian views of the country's history and society were expressed in book form for use in the schools and in the university, in government and non-governmental organisations, and by individuals writing their stories – which were both fictional and autobiographical.

Levels of literacy and lack of a reading culture

Prior to 1990, there had been only a few works of prose in the colonial languages (namely German, Afrikaans and English) whilst there was a wide range of oral literature and some indigenous writing which had been published. Lombard and Strauss in their *Impressions of Independence*, a collection of Namibian short stories in English, linked the lack of a prose writing tradition to the constraints which had been imposed by illiteracy (1991, p. iii).

Fortunately, the literacy rate has improved radically since independence. According to the Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census Basic Report, the literacy rate in Namibia for the population of five years of age and above was 85.3%. This brings Namibia into the top 10 African countries for literacy rates.

There is, however, a disjuncture between high literacy rates and a vibrant reading culture. The lack of a reading culture is no doubt in part explained by the existence of the strong oral traditions in the past and also by the high level of poverty in the country, since the vast majority of Namibians could not afford to buy books, even if they wished to do so. Also amongst the various media, the radio is by far the most popular as well as the most accessible medium of information. In Namibia, there is a lack of a general reading culture, something which the government (the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation in particular) is attempting to address.

Language policy

Following independence in 1990, English was elevated to its position as the official language of Namibia (Article 3, Namibian Constitution), rather than Afrikaans, the language of the previous South African colonial government. English is now the medium of instruction from the fourth year of school and is the language of the government, the tourism industry, international communication and the world of trade (Stals, 2008, p. 23).

English is, however, an official language which is spoken by very few Namibians and the relatively small population of 2.4 million is extraordinarily diverse in language and culture. More than eleven indigenous languages are recognised by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and most Namibians commonly speak two or three languages. Because of Namibia's colonial history, Afrikaans continues to be widely spoken and it functions as a lingua franca particularly in the southern and central parts of Namibia.

Indigenous languages are included in the school syllabus at a primary level and from Grades 4 or 5, English is the medium of instruction. Among the other European languages which are spoken in Namibia, German, Portuguese, Spanish and French are the most common. According to the 2011 census figures the main indigenous languages are:

Oshiwambo, spoken by 49% of households
 Nama/Damara, spoken by 11% of households
 Afrikaans, spoken by 10% of households
 Kavango, spoken by 9% of households; and
 Otjiherero spoken by 9% of households.²

Chapman (1996, p. 318) suggests that in a country of so many indigenous languages, with the official language English and the widely spoken Afrikaans, translation studies would have to be an important means of making the range of literature accessible to the reader.

Kerry Jones and Megan Biesele in Chapter 19, *Will there be written literature in Jul'hoansi, a Khoesan language of Namibia?* discuss the question of the language policy and explain how it is generally agreed by educators and linguists around the world that the best approach to education and literacy is through the student's mother tongue (Hays, 2007). They confirm that international educators urge the learning of literacy skills through the mother tongue for at least the first three to four years of schooling, after which these skills may be transferred to a lingua franca (ADEA, 2006). No meaningful adult literacy can, however, be developed from such beginnings unless an adult tradition of reading is advanced. For adults to read there has to be something of interest available to them, i.e. materials progressively expanding beyond those for the elementary grades. The first challenge for many minority and endangered language communities has therefore been the development of a written form or orthography of their general oral linguistic heritage.

Publishing and distribution

There is a lack of publishing opportunities for writers, except for school textbooks. The three new publishers in the post-independence period, were New Namibia Books (1990–2013) and more recently, Wordweaver (2012–2016) and Martial Publishing (2016).

Jane Katjavivi explores the link between the words for books and truth in the two indigenous languages, Otjiherero and Oshiwambo, and describes how most books in use in the country under the German and then South African rules were in the domain of the church or in the educational system. She traces the development of publishing in Namibia and the dynamics between educational and general publishing and locates the publisher, New Namibia Books, within the history of book development in Namibia. She then examines the contribution of New Namibia

² <http://www.gov.na/languages-spoken>

Books titles to writing, in particular, concerning the experiences of war, exile, return and reconciliation.

The long-standing difficulties of managing to obtain the publishing of fiction, in Namibia, has been partly related to market, cost, and language. This is also discussed by Brian Harlech-Jones in Chapter 15, *The Namibian novel: Reflections of an author*.

Government policy on arts/culture/heritage

Under Article 19 of the Namibian Constitution relating to culture, ‘every person shall be entitled to enjoy, practise, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion subject to the terms of this constitution’ (p. 14).

The state’s official attitude to culture, and literature in particular as an expression of that culture, and its support for the arts and for writers, is crucial. If there is a positive policy with some financial support, then writers will feel motivated and appreciated. Presently, it is the College of the Arts, the John Muafangejo Arts Centre as well as the Katutura Community Arts Centre, all of which are government funded, which train young Namibians in the visual arts and which host exhibitions of students’ works. In addition, foreign cultural centres provide financial assistance and exhibition and performance space to artists. The Franco Namibian Cultural Centre has a long history of supporting the visual and musical arts in particular, as does the Goethe-Institut and the Namibian-German Foundation for Cultural Cooperation. The National Theatre of Namibia has also taken some initiatives by hosting an annual live music competition over the past few years and by instituting a judging system with a mentorship for plays as well as a biannual film and theatre award ceremony with cash prizes and their accompanying incentives over more than a decade.

The National Arts Council of Namibia receives applications for funding and gives awards in various categories, with literature being one of those categories. With the result of this programme some budding authors, particularly poets and dramatists, have been able to publish anthologies of their work.

The current Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy was accepted in principle by the Cabinet of the Government in August 2001, but it has not yet been promulgated. The newly revised Arts, Culture and Heritage policy is still under review. It includes a section on literature, among other topics.

The original policy was framed under the mantra of ‘Unity, Identity and Creativity for Prosperity’ in August, 2001. There was mention of ‘Safeguarding and promoting our physical, linguistic and spiritual Heritage’, and a reference to the promotion of ‘widespread cultural and artistic expression’. The new policy is currently undergoing a refinement. It speaks of a concern for Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and mentions literary expression as an integral part of culture and heritage.

It is, however, interesting to read what Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja, who had a regular newspaper column under the name of ‘Chanting Warrior’ (and is the author of Chapter 12 in this volume), had to say:

Our arts and cultural sectors are lagging behind and we can only blame ourselves for it. Twenty five years after Independence and our arts and

cultural policy is still a draft collecting dust on government shelves. Other arts and cultural institutions such as the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN) and the National Arts Council have continuously failed to commit themselves to the development and promotion of the arts. ... Our Vision 2030 does not say much about arts and culture. This puts artists in a vulnerable and (an) unsafe position. (Under the headline, Namibia Take Care of Your Artists, *The Namibian*, 30 January 2015, p. 16)

Another playwright and film maker who no doubt shares this view is Vickson Hangula, since the general struggle of actors and artists in Namibia to make a living, is a key theme in his satirical and award-winning play *The Show's not over until...* (1998).

THEMES IN NAMIBIAN LITERATURE, BEFORE AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE

'Black writers choose their plots, characters and literary styles; their themes choose them' said Gordimer (1974, p. 11). This implies that African writers do not have to search for themes for their writing since these are everywhere around them.

One can categorise several themes emerging from Namibian literary works, written both before and after 1990, into the following broadly overlapping areas:

1. History (its re-interpretation and re-evaluation);
2. Home, exile and the liberation struggle;
3. Gender issues;
4. Nationalism and identity; and
5. Critique of a post-independence society.

History (its re-interpretation and re-evaluation)

It is essential to understand the importance of the first theme, history, as being fundamental to Namibian literature both before and after independence. The settings of many literary works go back to the past, even if they are also engaged with the present. It is possible that in writing about the past the authors are able to exorcise it in some way through the cathartic experience of re-envisioning it. Both history and literature are human experiences which are embodied in language, and as pointed out by Brink (1996, p. 142), 'rather than putting the two concepts in opposing camps, one should see their interrelationship, their essential symbiosis'. This is because story (literature) and history meet and mingle and the private experience (which is expressed in language) intersects the public, the social or the political (also experiences which are expressed in language). This idea is well reflected in the autobiographies written by Namibians before and after independence.

Sylvia Schlettwein provides an insightful contribution on this topic in Chapter 21, *When the colonised imperialists go post-colonial: Namibian-German literature since independence*. Whether as missionaries, as imperialists or as colonial settlers,

as British and South African subjects, and as citizens of an independent Namibia, the German-speakers of Namibia have always produced literary texts. The German writers in the colonial South West Africa quickly acquired a taste for anecdotal story-telling which is reminiscent of story-telling around the campfire. There is a new post-independence generation of German Namibian writers, who have tapped into this tradition of *Südwester* story-telling, but have also ventured into deconstructing, ironically breaking and reinventing it, which is gradually emerging.

Home, exile and the liberation struggle

Regarding the second theme of home and exile, Haarhoff (1991), in his study, *The Wild South West: Frontier myths and metaphors in literature set in Namibia 1760–1988* argues that during the past 200 years, successive visiting or invading metropolises have appropriated Namibia for a series of elaborate metaphors which were constructed from the cultural phenomenon of the centre, to express their own concerns and predicaments. He argues perceptively that Namibian writing in the period prior to independence can be ‘interpreted as illuminating the silences in the frontier text and as denial of the frontier metaphor, since their polarities are not frontier and metropole, but exile and home’ (1991, p. 2).

This insight also applies to post-independence Namibian literature where exile and home are dominant and recurring themes, as illustrated in the majority of the autobiographies, many of the novels and in much of the poetry.

Gender issues

A third theme of gender has proved to be popular for many contributors to this volume with four chapters exploring women’s writing, female agency, violence in women’s short stories, and women’s autobiographies with reference to particular texts.

Female agency is discussed by Margie Orford in Chapter 2, *Gathering scattered archives*, and by Netta Kornberg in Chapter 16, *Power at the margins: Black female agency in two Namibian novels*. Both authors focus on texts by Namibian women.

Orford is wide-ranging in her focus on history, archives and the issues of gender, discussing the sources of early texts by Namibian women who happen to be Ovaherero. She reviews the politics of archival retrieval and examines the challenges which colonial archives pose. She argues that people’s memories and oral traditions have been excluded from the historical archives. Through the analysing of three sets of texts, she describes how women have fashioned a sense of self and the ‘other’, and, how regulation and domestication of women has come into play in the colonial context.

Kornberg examines *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu’s Children*, books which represent experiences of black Namibian women during the liberation struggle and in so doing have given voice to one of the most marginalised groups of the 20th Century. She explores the various ways in which these novels construct an agency as deriving from the character’s marginality, rather than despite it, by borrowing concepts from testimonial literary studies. Domestic violence is the subject of a

study of women's short stories by Juliet S. Pasi and Nelson Mlambo in Chapter 17, *Autotelic violence: An analysis of Namibian short stories in Elizabeth \Khaxas' 'We Must Choose Life'*.

The authors endeavour to examine the violence, trauma and pain paradigm in an anthology of short stories by Namibian women. They interrogate in particular the possible causal paths of sexual violence and explore 'autotelic violence' which is defined by some academics as the 'will to violence', the 'aesthetics of violence', or 'the fascination with violence'. The central argument is that although many examples of autotelic violence from literature are Western, autotelic violence also exists in non-Western contexts and in the Namibian texts in particular. Hence, premised on the formalist theory, this chapter argues that the writings of the Namibian women in *We Must Choose Life*, could be used to illustrate both autotelic violence and the external causes of violence.

Another contribution to the volume which features gender and orature, but from a linguistic perspective this time, is Chapter 7 by Petrus Mbenzi titled *Gender stereotypes in Oshiwambo orature*. Mbenzi conducts a linguistic survey in order to determine the inclination of gender stereotyping which occurs in the Oshiwambo language.

Nationalism and identity

In relation to the fourth theme, nationalism and identity, history has shown that the euphoric years following political independence constitute the period during which national literature is born. It is the 'literature' which Frantz Fanon once regarded as the literature of the contemporary social class and national issues (Mbiye & Vale, 2001, p. 19). Writing about 'Namibian literature today' shortly after independence, Margie Orford (1994) observed that Namibian landscapes should not be seen 'as a backdrop for melodramatic romances and historical adventure literature in the Rider Haggard vein but as contributing in a major way to the growing body of literature that expresses what it was and is to be Namibian' (1994, p. 14).

In Chapter 9, *'Call of the Witpensuikerbekkie': Landscape as symbol in contemporary Namibian Poetry*, Sarala Krishnamurthy illustrates how multiple literary tropes and themes in poetry are closely linked to the questions of identity, nationhood and post-colonialism. She argues that poets lack the luxury of ahistorical landscapes since the landscapes which they write about are necessarily politicised, and their own subjectivities are intimately connected to the natural beauty and the traumatic history of the place. The author maintains that the poets confront and engage in varying degrees with the history of post-colonial geographies, of the capitalist commodification of the landscape and the devastating impact which this history has on the individual.

Patrick Colm Hogan reviews questions of nationalism and identity in Chapter 4, *Emplotting nationalism: Comparing Sam Nujoma's 'Where Others Wavered' and Joseph Diescho's 'Born of the Sun'*. His analysis begins with a broad, theoretical consideration of the nature of nationalism and the central operation of emplotment for a nationalist

movement. From there it turns to Nujoma, examining his autobiography as a fairly standard instance of a nationalist narrative. After Nujoma, the chapter takes up Diescho's novel which involves a relatively non-standard type of emplotment. The conclusion briefly considers the degree to which nationalist ideas guide emplotment versus the degree to which emplotment guides nationalist ideas.

Chapter 3 by Kelly Jo Fulkerson-Dikuua, *Conceptualising national transition: Namibian women's autobiographies about the liberation struggle*, also raises the questions of nationalism and identity. Fulkerson-Dikuua not only discusses three autobiographies by Namibian women but also links them to the national and personal transition and broadly, testimonial literature. Stating that autobiographies should be considered as literature, she closely examines the autobiographies of three important women in Namibia: Libertina Amathila's *Making a Difference* (2012), Lydia Shaketange's *Walking the Boeing 707* (2008) and Ellen Namhila's *The Price of Freedom* (2006).

Critique of a post-independence society

Most contemporary Namibian literature in English in all genres, but particularly poetry and drama, can be placed under the final theme of critique of a post-independence society. The interview in Chapter 10 with Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong on the themes in his poetry and Chapter 11 by Laurinda Olivier-Sampson on the plays of Frederick Philander, are evidence of this engagement.

Whilst literature in English prior to independence in Namibia has revealed the themes of struggle, oppression, exile, and hope for liberation and identity, post-independence themes have expanded to include social critique with the issues of poverty, gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS, and corruption coming to the fore amidst a gradual disenchantment.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN NAMIBIAN LITERATURE

Since Namibia's independence, modern writers have started experimenting with new forms of literature. Whilst the themes continue to be a critique of the post independent society, and certain despondency and a despair about poverty, landlessness and loss of identity, exciting developments have taken place in the way new writers play with the traditional forms of writing and have given them a fresh and different appearance. Thus, for instance, we have film makers exploring their angst through a visual medium.

Contemporary poetry

In Chapter 8, Hugh Ellis and Don Stevenson, both poets, scrutinise Spoken Word, the Windhoek based platform for performance poets. From early in the 21st Century, performance poetry has experienced a resurgence in urban Namibia, especially among the youth. Ellis and Stevenson ask what a forum like Spoken Word can contribute to poetry in Namibia, how it might impact upon so-called 'literary' poetry, and how

it could expand beyond its current key market or main constituency, of the urban youth. They examine poems taken from some of the regular performers at Spoken Word, as well as a media discourse about the movement, and the authors' personal experiences as performance poets.

Chapter 10 is a rare interview with a versatile and modest poet, playwright and performer, Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong, and gives insights into his own creative path.

Modern Namibian theatre

In Chapter 11, *Representing Namibian drama (1985–2000): Frederick Philander*, Laurinda Olivier-Sampson looks at playwright Philander's works as an example of Namibian published drama from 1985 to 2000. She tries to establish to what extent Philander's drama scripts have reflected the socio-political milieu in Namibia during the five years before independence and again during the decade after independence. Philander is an important figure in the history of Namibian theatre because he has been consistent in his output and offers a rich source for the student of Namibian theatre history.

Chapter 13, *The development in theatre since independence: A director's perspective*, consists of a wide-ranging interview with Sandy Rudd, veteran theatre practitioner (director, script writer and former drama lecturer), and is a further contribution on drama. Sandy Rudd gives her unique perspective on the development of theatre in Namibia to Helen Vale. From this interview, it is clear that Rudd has developed her own philosophy of the theatre and has contributed hugely to the development of the theatre in Namibia over the past three decades. This was recognised in 2010 when she received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Namibian Theatre and Film Awards for her contribution to theatre in Namibia.

Drama and the applied arts

In his topical and controversial Chapter 12, Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja argues for decolonisation of the arts since he believes that Namibians should draw inspiration from their own indigenous cultural heritage. He speaks of the struggle for collaboration, visibility, voice, place and critical engagement in Namibian contemporary arts and its applications to educational, community, therapeutic, organisational and other social contexts. Under the umbrella of applied arts Mushaandja identifies areas such as Theatre for Development, Community Creative Arts, Creative Arts Therapies, Playback Theatre, Museum Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Curatorial Arts, Drama in Education and Organisational Theatre/Industrial Arts.

His chapter gives a wide-ranging critique of some contemporary applied arts practices, particularly in Namibia, and the complexities surrounding them. To give shape to his argument Mushaandja investigates several creative research projects, focuses on the radical transformation in the applied arts, citing his own theatre making, performance and writing experience of working in other SADC countries.

Modern film

In Chapter 14, *Reading Namibian film*, Hans-Christian Mahnke explains how young Namibian scriptwriters and film directors have taken up the role of adding their voices to tell Namibian stories and commenting on Namibian society through the medium of film. Filmmakers are at the forefront of telling Namibian stories to Namibians and to interested international audiences alike.

Mahnke gives an interpretation of Namibian films such as *Try*, *Rider Without a Horse*, *Cries at Night*, and *My Beautiful Nightmare* which are analysed in terms of the stories they tell and the underlying social message which the films carry. He asserts that the filmmakers' role is crucial to Namibia's society, as films bridge the gap between old and young, and fill the vacuum of an absent storyteller in the urban areas of Namibia.

As with the other chapters in this book, the author adds to our understanding of how a society in transition and the resultant social challenges are revealed through the medium of film or the written word.

The post-colonial novel

The novel genre (in English, Afrikaans and Otjiherero) is tackled by several contributors to this volume.

In Chapter 15, *The Namibian novel: Reflections of an author*, Brian Harlech-Jones contemplates the nature of the novel, in order to identify some of its primary characteristics. He shows that the novel's central focus on a character can make it 'political' and even 'subversive', especially in conditions which are autocratic and oppressive. He also discusses the long-standing difficulties of getting fiction published in Namibia and examines in some detail his own two novels in English, *A Small Space* and *To Dream Again*.

The future for Namibian novelists is rather bleak. To write and publish a novel takes time and determination, as well as finding a publisher and a readership. Despite these constraints, several novels have been published since independence in a variety of languages including Afrikaans (see Helize van Vuuren's Chapter 18), German (see Sylvia Schlettwein's Chapter 21) and Otjiherero (see Alfeus Tjiro's Chapter 6).

Harlech-Jones concludes that novels can be important vehicles for the shaping of the ways in which Namibians understand themselves and each other, and for the influence of social and political attitudes.

Autobiography

Autobiography has been a popular genre with Namibian authors both before and after independence and three chapters engage with it. These are Fulkerson-Dikua's Chapter 3 on the autobiographies of three Namibian women writers, Hogan's Chapter 4 where he looks at Nujoma's autobiography *Where Others Wavered* and compares it with Diescho's novel *Born of the Sun* through the lens of emplotment, both of which were discussed in an earlier section and, finally, Jason Owens and Sarala Krishnamurthy's Chapter 5, *The forgotten child of Namibia: An analysis of*

Misheke Matongo's autobiography. The GDR Kids, as they are popularly known, pose a challenge in Namibia because they have found themselves in a country to which they have little sense of belonging and affiliation. Nearly four hundred children were sent to the German Democratic Republic in the late 1970s/early 1980s from SWAPO camps in Zambia and Angola to protect them from attacks by the South African Defence Force and to train them for governing the country after independence. Misheke Matongo was one of the GDR Kids. Owens and Krishnamurthy critically analyse Matongo's unpublished short autobiography with a view to shedding light on the actual experience and the reasons behind their marginalisation. Matongo's portrayal captures the trauma and anguish of these children and the way in which they learnt to cope in dire circumstances.

One of the short stories analysed by Pasi and Mlambo in Chapter 17, is also autobiographical. In addition, the two interviews of Helen Vale with Rudd and Molapong, draw on their life experiences and are, therefore, autobiographical in nature.

LITERATURE IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

While post-independent Namibian literature cannot boast of many writings in languages other than English, it cannot be denied that Afrikaans literature has a long and noteworthy history in Namibia, starting before independence. Similarly, German novels have also been written by the local Germans who have settled in Namibia. Since independence, writers have also been publishing more novels, short stories and poetry in some of the indigenous languages.

Literature in Afrikaans

Of the works with Namibian themes, those of the authors Piet van Rooyen and George Weideman are the most prominent. Not only did they produce prize-winning literature, their narratives have also reached a broader general public. Van Rooyen's books each have an explicit Namibian theme, while one of Weideman's novels, *Draaijakkals*, also presents the post-independence Namibian situation.

Three of Van Rooyen's novels, *Die Spoorsnyer* (The Tracker, 1994), *Agter 'n Eland Aan* (Following the Eland, 1995) and *Die Olifantjagters* (The Elephant Hunters, 1997) received major awards. In Chapter 18, 'Keeping a pet Bushman alive': *Piet van Rooyen's Namibian oeuvre*, Helize van Vuuren evaluates these San or 'Bushman' novels and the autobiographical text of Piet van Rooyen within the Namibian context. Her focus is on the ideological stance taken by Van Rooyen which, in the creative work, is in sharp contrast with the scientific perspectives expressed in the autobiographical, *Agter 'n Eland Aan*.

Aspects of the works, which are highlighted in this descriptive and evaluative overview, are in the literary tradition within which Van Rooyen writes, namely, the portrayal of women characters, the discourse of manliness, the view of Africa (here, specifically in Namibia) which are presented in his work, and how the Jul'hoan culture and mythology is creatively presented in the novels.

Literature in German

Unlike other post-colonial literatures, where the majority of the formerly colonised population have appropriated and abrogated the language of the coloniser to create their own literatures and literary discourses, the Namibian-German literature is produced by a minority population of German native speakers who find themselves in the unique position of expressing themselves in a language which is viewed as colonial, foreign and indigenous all at the same time. In the light of its uniqueness and the interest it has for post-colonial literary discourse, a definition, overview and review of contemporary Namibian-German literature is provided for in Schlettwein's Chapter 21.

Literature and linguistic analysis in Jul'hoansi

In Chapter 19, *Will there be written literature in Jul'hoansi, a Khoesan language of Namibia?* Kerry Jones and Megan Bieseke look at the challenges of moving from an oral to a written language when discussing the case of the Jul'hoan. The authors give the historical background of more than twenty years in which a written form of Jul'hoansi has been used by the Namibian Jul'hoan. Jul'hoansi is an endangered Khoesan, or 'click' language. Tracing the development of Khoesan from initiatives by Jul'hoan parents on behalf of their children around the time of Namibia's independence, the chapter provides an outline of collaboration among communities, NGOs, linguists, and the Namibian education system leading to the Jul'hoan educational and language projects which are active today. The results of this research have provided a guideline for the research of language and literature of threatened minorities at a world level.

Literature in Oshiwambo

Proverbs, folk tales, myths and legends are an integral part of Aawambo culture and also form the Oshiwambo orature which is useful in transmitting the norms and traditions of its society. In Chapter 7, *Gender stereotypes in Oshiwambo orature*, Mbenzi's claim that there is gender stereotyping in the orature, is substantiated with a detailed analysis of proverbs at the three levels namely, the phraseological, the lexical and the morphological.

Literature in Otjiherero

In Chapter 6, *Otjiherero literature in transition from the oral to the written word*, Alfeus Tjijoro explains that orature is a part of the Ovaherero tradition and should not be denigrated because it is not in a written form. Tracing the development of Otjiherero literature, Tjijoro argues that all three genres, poetry, prose and drama are becoming popular forms of writing among the Ovaherero people.

Children's literature

In Chapter 20, *Multilingual children's books in an independent Namibia: The emergence of a new literature*, Andree-Jeanne Tötemeyer investigates the history, challenges and current situation of book publishing for children in Namibia since independence. She

points out that whilst Namibian publishers have been reluctant to publish writing in the indigenous languages, there has been a boom in production of children's books in English from 1990 onwards. Töttemeyer examines children's literature and identifies a decisive shift in tone and themes. She finds that the most recent children's books have presented African literary characters which are all embracing and celebrate a society in transition from the old to the new. Chapter 19 on written literature in Jul'hoansi, also includes an analysis of the successful *Jul'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary*.

CONCLUSION

This volume is comprehensive, challenging and diverse, drawing on the insights of local and international academics, principally in the fields of literature and language, and practitioners in the different genres. We hope it will go a long way in addressing the large lacuna in the critical assessment of Namibian writing since independence.

In our introduction, we have looked at the nature of transition, the factors which support a vibrant culture of writing and reading, themes in Namibian literature in pre- and post-independence, and we link these to the cross-cutting issues which emerge from the different chapters.

Creative writing in Namibia has blossomed since independence and has given many authors, who have long been silent, unheeded and unheard, the opportunity to find a voice. One has, however, to ask the key question, namely, what the future holds for creative writing in Namibia. For authors, writing is not financially viable as a full time profession because of the small market/readership, as well as the lack of publishing opportunities; whilst for readers, even finding works of Namibian literature to buy can be a challenge since they need the funds to purchase, the time and interest to read, and the bookshops which sell such writings. Live performances of poetry and plays make these genres possibly more accessible than prose, but only to the urban elite. Promoting more books by Namibian authors as set texts in the schools, would be one way of encouraging Namibian literature, since this would ensure a large youthful readership.

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1

The shifting grounds of emancipation: From the anti-colonial struggle to a critique of post-colonial society³

Henning Melber

In search ...

In search of myself
There is many a book on the shelf
written by the enemy himself
about many a child – ourselves
but disappointingly little by us – for ourselves
In search of myself
I must ceaselessly delve
against the enemy for the shelves
my genuine independence for himself
it's 'war' until forever when I am myself
(Mvula ya Nangolo)

³ Dedicated to the memory of Neshani Andreas (1964–2011) for giving voice to the ordinary women of Namibia in their brave struggle to master daily life in a male-dominated society. As she once explained in her own words: 'Namibia was a new country, people were still talking about the struggle, about exile and returning home. Writers were expected to write about great events, to glorify the past and the present, to glorify people. My struggle was different. I was not involved in high-profile political activities. I had to write about other things: travelling in overcrowded minibuses, selling and buying at markets, about sickness, witchcraft and church, about ordinary things.' (Von Wietersheim, 2004).

I thank the Cultural Foundation of Social Integration Centre of Excellence at the University of Konstanz for hosting me as a guest researcher at the Konstanz Institute for Advanced Study during February and March 2015, where I could update and expand an earlier version of this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

'Knowledge is power' was the inscription on the ruler I used as a student at the *Deutsche Höhere Privatschule Windhoek* (the private German high school) during the 1960s. Those who dominate seek to impose their definition of such knowledge and its substance upon other members of society. This is a difficult, if not impossible mission in the long term when it comes to the blatant ideological dimensions transmitted in an effort to give legitimacy to foreign colonial minority rule. As a result of the desire for self-determination and national sovereignty by the colonised majorities, which were determined to resist foreign domination, colonial regimes came to an end across the world, although it was a late act in the Namibian case. During the process of liberation, anti-colonial struggles raged on an ideological battlefield. These efforts promoted the right to self-determination not only through armed resistance and popular protest, but also through the spoken and written word. The relevance of redefining and owning one's own history is expressed in the opening poem.

The slogan of knowledge being power also applies to those who seek to practise the power of definition. Ultimately those promoting alternative societies in a fight against institutionalised injustice, may end up shaping and controlling a new society, which has common features and even fundamental characteristics which are already deeply entrenched by the old regimes which they claim to have overcome. The Indian sociologist Ashis Nandy (1984) has illustrated, how his own society was reproduced under an independent Indian government, with values and perceptions rooted in British colonialism. In the title of a chapter in his manifesto, Frantz Fanon (2001) qualified such perpetuation of the old within the new as the pitfalls of national consciousness. In a pioneering novel written during the Angolan struggle against Portuguese colonialism, Pepetela (1996) sensibly anticipated that any revolution ended and replaced a former authoritarian system of oppression with a new political leadership and a government which did not differ fundamentally in its concept of power and control. The desire for emancipation shifted with the new reference points which were created, but did not cease. The power of knowledge therefore played a role in social struggles anywhere at any time.

Knowledge is adjusted in changing societies, but often continues to reflect dominant interests. Organised and institutionalised knowledge production and dissemination are regulated through the introduction of new textbooks at school, as well as a new curriculum and newly emerging public discourses which dominate. But dissenting voices always exist in the new regime. Those who differ from the officially correct views under colonialism might also not be in agreement with everything which replaces the old system, thereby claiming to represent an alternative. Some of those who are critical of the abuse of power, might remain critical about the concept and use of power under the new settings with different legitimising ideologies. While there is no doubt that colonialism and the minority rule in Namibia were immoral, unacceptable and untenable, the alternatives which have been established since then have not necessarily embraced the visions and hopes of the people.

Societies are in constant transition as they reproduce themselves. The intensity of the transition might change, and the official beginning, as well as the formal end of the colonial occupation and foreign rule, such as a political power which is first installed by a centralised and an externally imposed structure which is then transferred to a local agency, are the most obvious points of reference or departure for these new changes. These milestones are neither necessarily sudden nor complete and they might induce a rapid social change through a more dramatic shift in the organisation of political and social structures, with a direct impact on the fabric and nature of societies.

Social transitions in Namibia have been analysed from a historical perspective at different stages and in different contexts. The hitherto most comprehensive and authoritative overview of Namibia's history until independence in 1990 is Marion Wallace and John Kinahan's *History of Namibia* (2011). As the authors claim, Namibia is 'one of Africa's least understood and studied countries' (Wallace, 2011, p. 13). The book itself however, contradicts this statement by providing an access to a comparatively large variety of relevant and diverse literature. This chapter seeks to complement the historical perspective by focusing on the shift in literature from the emancipation and solidarity during the anti-colonial struggle to the critical reflections under a new government. Such an attempt cannot provide a complete and comprehensive analysis but is necessarily selective.⁴ It focuses on the printed word and ignores other forms of cultural expression such as music and the fine arts. Despite its limitations, the following overview enhances the current knowledge by presenting references to the literature which are considered relevant for the illustration of the contextual 'shifting grounds for emancipation'. Admittedly, the panorama is presented in a fashion which is also guided by the personal perspective of the author, who has been involved in such writing with shifting perspectives since the late 1970s.

In the following section, I would like to summarise a 'struggle literature' (see Melber 1990) which was engaged with the effects of South Africa's occupation of the territory and had taken sides as a political manifestation mobilising against the colonial rule from the 1960s. This is followed by a summary of the literature on aspects of the Namibian society in transition from independence. Its focus is on the new analyses in the process of national development to what has since been termed the limits to liberation (Melber, 2003). The critical assessment stresses the need for a continuing advocacy in the support of democracy, human rights and the social redistribution of wealth. Academic writing or the more popular non-fiction alone is not enough to grasp the coping mechanisms of literary engagement with a society. I, therefore, complement the overview of the different stages of scholarly

⁴ To limit the considerable number and variety of texts even under the narrowly defined perspective adopted in this chapter, I refer almost exclusively to freestanding publications in English (monographs and edited volumes) dealing with Namibia and considered relevant to the specific perspective guiding this overview. Hardly any references are made to publications in other languages or relevant chapters published in volumes or in journals. Largely ignored are also other forms of publications (theses, working papers, government documents, grey literature, etc.), although they often offer additional valuable insights.

and other non-fictional literature by pointing out the developments in creative writing. In conclusion, I would like to suggest that knowledge production reflects on the restraints and challenges to a vibrant civil society and is dependent upon the socio-political environment.

STRUGGLE LITERATURE FROM THE 1960s TO THE 1980s

The emergence of a literature which promoted the rights of the Namibian people for self-determination, had also accompanied the international struggles for decolonisation elsewhere on the African continent. It was particularly motivated and encouraged by the establishment of the national liberation movement, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). With a growing number of sovereign African states joining the United Nations from the late 1950s when 'the winds of change'⁵ started to blow, the global arena was transformed in support of the struggles for emancipation. Subsequent responses by the General Assembly and other organs of the world body supported the legitimate demands by the Namibian people which were represented mainly (and later exclusively) by SWAPO and this provided an arena for the voices demanding the right to self-determination.

An annotated, critical bibliography compiled in the mid-1980s (Eriksen, 1985), had provided a comprehensive and detailed overview on the relevant literature on Namibia until then. Here, only a few among the most remarkable contributions in support of, or from the ranks of, the liberation movement, can be identified. The pioneering study in this context has to be credited to the South African activist, journalist and scholar Ruth First (1963) who, after a visit to Namibia, paved the way for a generation of partisan literature to follow.⁶ She also co-edited a volume which was based on one of the first prominent international conferences organised in support of Namibian independence in 1964 (Segal & First, 1967). Another advocate who has been identified with the Namibian anti-colonial struggle and who contributed significantly to a growing international awareness, was the late Bishop Colin O'Brien Winter who, in 1972, was banned from the country and who continued to campaign relentlessly for Namibian independence (Winter, 1977). Prominent scholar-activists in Western Europe who supported the struggles for independence in Namibia included, most prominently, Richard Moorsom (1987) and Reginald Green (1988).

Notable writings emerging in the local/regional context, which signalled the growing differences in the analyses and the responses to the organised anti-colonial

⁵ A catch phrase coined by the British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan in his speeches when visiting African countries in early 1960. In the South African Parliament he stated i.a.: 'The wind of change is blowing through this continent, and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.' See: <https://www.thoughtco.com/harold-macmillans-wind-of-change-speech-43760>. The slogan's adaptation to Namibia became the most popular international song for Jackson Kaujeua (1953–2010), which even entered the British charts.

⁶ Largely unrecognised is an earlier advocacy role by the US-American Allard Lowenstein (1962).

struggle led by SWAPO, included the published PhD thesis of a Stellenbosch-based, Namibian-born academic, Gerhard Töttemeyer (1978). Much to the dislike of his political peers, he acknowledged that SWAPO was the most relevant political force in the northern region of so-called Ovamboland. While it was not truly a part of the struggle literature, this book marked a turning point for a South African debate and its author. Originally a member of the National Party in South Africa and an adviser to Prime Minister Vorster on the Namibia policy, Töttemeyer was dismissed from the party as a result of his views and, later on, his growing affiliation with the national liberation movement, ended in several high-ranking administrative positions and in a political career as a deputy minister in an independent Namibia. Along similar lines, another South African-based scholar with Namibian roots, André du Pisani,⁷ took sides when he published a critical analysis of the South African policy in Namibia (Du Pisani, 1985). Like Töttemeyer, Du Pisani later returned as a prominent scholar to the University of Namibia and remained committed to Namibian affairs and social and political changes. Both are examples of intellectuals who during their careers have chosen a Namibian identity.

As from the 1980s, a growing number of black Namibian voices made use of the international arena to articulate their critical analyses of the colonial rule, the oppression, and the anti-colonial struggles against foreign occupation and exploitation. A major breakthrough was a monograph by undisclosed authors in the name of the liberation movement (SWAPO of Namibia, 1981). The most prominent platform for the articulation of Namibian views among those exiled and with access to higher learning was provided by the spectacular international conference held in London in 1984, on the occasion of a hundred years of colonial rule. It brought together the widest range of scholars and activists from Namibia and the support of Namibian liberation. The subsequent publication of the rich and diverse spectrum of presentations on all aspects of the history, the economy, culture and other spheres of society, including contributions by some of the brightest Namibian students of the time, could be considered the best documentation of the variety of Namibian literature in support of the struggle for self-determination (Wood, 1988). A volume edited by Töttemeyer, Kandetu and Werner (1987) and published internally under the auspices of the Council of Churches in Namibia, provided a platform for critical analyses during the South African regime, taking stock of the colonial legacy and its challenges for the post-colonial transition of the society. The important role played by the independent Namibian churches in the struggle against the continued South African occupation, was the subject of another volume produced within the ranks of the exiled scholars (Katjavivi, Frostin & Mbuende, 1989).

While using opportunities to obtain higher academic qualifications during their studies abroad and in exile as active members of the anti-colonial movement, several of the more senior Namibian scholars published PhD theses with a clear political focus on the challenges of the anti-colonial struggle. These included, most notably, the thesis on education by Mauno Mbamba (1982), the studies on the situation of

⁷ Du Pisani contributes the Foreword to this volume.

women by Ndeutala Hishongwa (1983/1992) and the economic sociology of Kaire Mbuende (1986), all of which were published by Swedish publishers. The historical thesis of Peter Katjavivi, published by UNESCO (1988), was internationally the most acknowledged document. Possibly the most rigorous and radical of these theses was published in Finland by Elia Kaakunga (1990). All these works testified to the scholarly capacity within the ranks of the anti-colonial movement. Few scholars, however, followed Peter Katjavivi's example of returning at independence to academic positions at home. This suggests that the general phenomenon of a brain drain in societies in transition, occurred in the Namibian case as well. Those who qualified for service in higher education or related spheres, were either absorbed by the public administration and political offices to run the state of affairs in the country, or they remained abroad.

Other popular genres of the struggle literature complemented scholarly endeavours in the fields of education and the arts as well as in personal narratives, revealing that the process of articulating demands for emancipation was not confined to the academic areas. On the educational front, efforts to promote alternatives to the notorious Bantu education and its syllabi materialised in two textbooks (Melber, 1984; Mbumba & Noisser, 1988). These were compiled in cooperation between the Namibia Project at Bremen University and SWAPO, and were developed for use in the schools at the SWAPO Centres in Nyango (Zambia), Cuanza Sul (Angola), the senior secondary school in Loudima (People's Republic of the Congo) and a series of other educational institutions in exile as well as for the autonomous church schools inside the country. They translated critical analyses into teaching material for Namibian students, as distinct from the dominant discriminatory interpretations justifying the white minority rule. Their intention was to counteract the effects of the humiliating racial discrimination by providing positive references towards an identity, self-respect, and dignity for African culture and the anti-colonial resistance.

The emerging new Namibian identity born in the liberation struggle, also gave birth to a new, written Namibian culture. The products were initially often biographically inspired prose and poetry of a literature of combat (Melber, 1990), with the members of the international solidarity movement providing support. These publications were all created and printed abroad. Recorded, transcribed and, finally, edited life-histories of Namibians involved in the struggle for liberation, were the first attempts at expressing genuine Namibian aspirations in the field of literature. The historical merit of activists of the Liberation Support Movement (LSM) based in Canada and the United States of America, had initially stimulated and encouraged such a literature. The LSM had a long tradition of recording and publishing life histories of members of liberation movements, such as the Kenyan Mau Mau, the Angolan MPLA, the Zimbabwean ZAPU and the South African ANC, within a series entitled *Life Histories from the Revolution*. Members of the LSM also conducted in-depth interviews with SWAPO activists and pioneered Namibian literature in this category: Dennis Mercer (1974) compiled the story of Vinnia Ndadi, whilst Ole Gjerstad documented the experiences of Hinananje Shafodino Nehova (1978),

and, finally, there were the collected efforts of Ole Gjerstad, Michael Mercer and John Ya-Otto which resulted in the latter's impressive biography, which is the most prominent of these documents and was widely published and introduced to the international book market through the legendary African Writers Series (Ya-Otto, Gjerstad, & Mercer, 1981). Another autobiographically oriented publication, which articulated a woman's point of view, was published in exile by Ndeutala Hishongwa (1986). There was also, to some extent, the autobiographically inspired fiction of one of the first truly Namibian novels by Joseph Diescho (1988) and the semi-biographical narrative of Helmut Angula (1990). While published only after independence, the life histories of Helao Shityuwete (1990) and Ellen Namhila (1997) come into this category of personal narratives which related to the history of, and involvement in, the anti-colonial struggle. So does, most prominently, the (auto)biography of Sam Nujoma (2001), whose account ends with Namibian independence. The exceptional role and influence of the latter in the formation of anti-colonial resistance, as well as the building of the Namibian nation, places this volume in a different category and makes it the most prominent case of what in the literature has been named – originally with reference to Zimbabwe's post-colonial historiography – as a patriotic history (see Saunders, 2003, 2007; Du Pisani, 2007).⁸

Poetry has been a popular and prominent vehicle to mobilise and promote the Namibian resistance to colonial rule. In addition to the numerous poems which were published in the printed media by both SWAPO and associated anti-colonial organisations, several distinct collections of Namibian poetry on combat, testify to the aspirations of Namibian people to find their own means of expression. The book which was privately printed by a journalist in the service of the Department of Information and Publicity of SWAPO, is the first collection of poems published in English by a Namibian poet (Ya Nangolo, 1976/1991).⁹ This was followed by an anthology of poems by students at the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka (Melber, 1982). Patemann and Mbumba (1988) published another collection of poems by teachers in the refugee schools in Angola and Zambia. Finally, the poems by Ben Ulenga (1989) transcended what Frantz Fanon has characterised as 'a literature of combat' without abandoning it, and were among the first of their kind published at home.¹⁰ This illustrated at the same time the dynamics unfolding in the domestic setting towards the end of the 1980s, when the voices of resistance were articulated more openly and in defiance of political repression. At the same time, literary production abroad had resulted in mixed responses within the sphere of local academia (Ohly, 1988).

⁸ See also Chapter 4 in this volume.

⁹ A few poems from this volume have been included in the anthology edited by Frank Mkalawile Chipasula, *When my brothers come home. Poems from Central and Southern Africa*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1985, while the re-publication after Namibia's independence (Ya Nangolo 1991) added more recent poetry.

¹⁰ Another noteworthy exception also signalling decisive shifts at the domestic literary front, is the mainly Afrikaans compilation edited by Heinrich Rall, *Goël. Kortverhale & gedigte uit Namibië*. Windhoek: Bricks, 1989.

NON-FICTION IN TRANSITION AND ON TRANSITION

Until Namibian independence, analyses of the politically organised liberation struggle had been highly polarised and had openly propagated either the South African ideology and perspective, or that of the anti-colonial movement. This antagonistic climate had made it difficult, if not impossible, to present critical analyses in solidarity with the struggle. Initial analyses by scholars with a credible track record of practised solidarity with the anti-colonial struggles, were provided in the volume edited by Colin Leys and John Saul (1995) and were complemented in the thesis of Lauren Dobell (1998). Both works presented a sombre picture of the national liberation movement as an organisation with a limited emancipatory potential characterised by internal power struggles.

A particular trade union perspective and a critical assessment of the subsumption of workers' interests and political autonomy under the political leadership of SWAPO, are described in the published PhD theses by Pekka Peltola (1995) and Gretchen Bauer (1998). The thesis by Heike Becker (1995) explores a gendered perspective and describes how the nucleus of an independent women's movement was hijacked and forced into the ranks of the anti-colonial liberation organisation. Soirii (1996) assesses the role of women from an insider's perspective. Martha Akawa (2014) adds an important gendered perspective by recording the experiences and the views of women who were living in the exile camps. The treatment of gender and dependent minors as a challenge for a domestic policy and a problem of marginalisation and abuse, has been pursued further through a number of contributions to the volumes edited by LaFont and Hubbard (2007), and Ruppel (2008, 2009). Recently, the plight and resilience of those suffering discrimination while maintaining their rights for same-sex relations, has been recognised (Lorway, 2015). Legal aspects of a society in transition, have also been reflected in a number of volumes, not least in the comprehensive stocktaking on constitutionalism after one decade of independence (Hinz, Amoo & Van Wyk, 2002) and after two decades of independence (Bösl, Horn & Du Pisani, 2010) respectively, as well as on related issues concerning the rule of law (Horn & Bösl, 2008).

One of the most contested taboos was disclosed with the publication of the personal accounts and testimony of Pastor Siegfried Groth (1995), which later resulted in strong public responses. His revelations of the treatment of suspected spies within the ranks of SWAPO in exile, confirmed what had been known but had been less visibly and openly discussed. His book had also resulted in the establishment of a local group of so-called ex-detainees in an initiative of 'Breaking the Wall of Silence' and hence had had direct consequences. Further testimonies to these unresolved matters were subsequently documented in volumes providing space for the articulation of local voices (Becker, 2005; Leys & Brown, 2005), in books by those directly involved (Nathanael, 2002; Ndeikwila, 2014; Beukes, 2014) and by critical observers (Trehwela, 2009; Williams, 2015). In a study on the role of the Namibian churches since transition, this issue has also been a subject of intense

soul searching (Töttemeyer, 2010), followed by a more general engagement with the notion of reconciliation (Töttemeyer, 2014).

The focus on the transitions among local Namibian communities since independence, is rare with regard to the specific focus of this chapter. A notable exception is Friedman (2011).¹¹ Local perspectives and realities feature most prominently on the various San or Bushman communities. These present an exception to the general tendency for analyses to focus on the most influential social groups within a country, rather than on the marginalised indigenous minority groups which are viewed as social outcasts or exotic tourist displays. The San have achieved relative prominence in the literature since independence (Gordon, 1992; Widlok, 1999; Gordon & Douglas, 2000; Suzman, 2000, 2002; Dieckmann, 2007; Biesele & Hitchcock, 2011; Taylor, 2012; Koot, 2013). They have therefore become a kind of prism or mirror for a certain pressure on the communities to adapt and to explore new survival strategies.¹²

The focus on the social transformation processes which are linked to the sectoral and regional issues which go beyond the specific group identities, has been rather limited. Among the exceptions are Forrest (1998) and several contributions to the volumes which were edited by Bollig and Gewald (2000) and Miescher and Henrichsen (2000).

A visible trend towards a more critical perspective has emerged since the turn of the century. Contributions to several edited volumes have started to reconsider the achievements as well as the failures of the liberation movement as a government. The proclaimed noble goals have been measured increasingly against the (lack of) delivery. Such compilations have been added to the focus on the social and political challenges since independence. The chapters in Keulder (2000) do so in a historical, state-centered perspective; contributions to Melber (2000) look at the socio-economic realities after a decade of sovereignty, while chapters in Diener and Graefe (2001) offer a wider panorama. The compilation by Winterfeldt, Fox and Mufune (2002) represents a unique achievement insofar as it is published locally and has an almost exclusive Namibian authorship which reflects a scholarly advancement in the sociological discipline(s).¹³ Two complementing subsequent volumes by Melber (2003, 2007) concentrate on the political culture and on the wider aspects of the transition. The volume by Du Pisani, Kössler and Lindeke (2010) combines current policy analyses as well as the economic and historical studies. All these

¹¹ There is, however, an increasing engagement with other local (and ethnically defined) communities, mainly in less prominently published forms (including micro-analyses of a consultancy nature and often related to tourism). These also include studies on the fragile ecology and environment such communities are confronted with (a prominent example are the Topnaar along the Kuiseb River in the Namib Desert).

¹² See also Chapters 18 and 19 in this volume.

¹³ Pempelani Mufune, one of the editors of that volume, who continued to contribute to the social science debate as an academic at the University of Namibia with particular reference to the challenges presented by HIV/AIDS, succumbed to cancer in early 2015. This footnote serves as recognition of his longstanding service to knowledge production and capacity building in the country. Sadly so, the same applies to Bill Lindeke, who shared a similar fate at almost the same time.

undertakings have a high degree of local participation, and also, increasingly, of younger scholars.¹⁴ Until recently (Melber, 2014, 2016), monographs with a critical analytical focus combining the socio-political and socio-economic realities of a post-colonial Namibia did not exist.

SOCIAL REALITIES AS MİRRORED IN MEMORIES, POETRY, PROSE AND THEATRE

Personal testimonies of individuals involved in the processes of change documented the social transition. Similarly, engagement through poetry and prose offered a view on the society. So far little has been published on this genre in the context of Namibia. It is revealing that even a portrait of Namibia published in the series *Culture smart! Namibia* (Whiting, 2008), does not mention literature. By pleasant contrast, Ejikeme (2011) devotes well-informed chapters to 'Literature and the Media' and 'Music, Dance and Performance'.¹⁵

With national sovereignty, a number of texts engaging with social realities before, during and after the independence process, were published (notably Diescho, 1993). While a few more personal life stories recalling the struggle days before independence have appeared (see, for example, Shivute, 1997), personal memories and reflections on political and social changes have become more diversified (see Kaujeua, 1994), especially in the accounts guided by a female perspective. Namhila (1997) was among the first to set such an example, which was most prominently followed by Amathila (2012).¹⁶ Grand narratives of patriotic history and introspection which had been guided by self-glorification, gradually faded away. The very personal account by Jane Katjavivi (2010) impresses by its unpretentious nature, stressing individual human relations more than anything else. Somewhat different in perspective and experiences, the story of Lucia Engombe (2014) belongs to this category as well. New forms of recorded and published oral history also provide access to testimonies which afford insights into the processes of social and political transition, and transformation (Namhila, 2005). This recorded evidence provides ample opportunities for critical interpretations, transcending patriotic history into narratives which are closer to the Namibian reality.

The novels by Hiyalwa (2000) and Andreas (2001) offer a gendered perspective which engages with forms of the structural as well as individual physical violence.¹⁷ In particular, the novel by Neshani Andreas, published like John Ya-Otto's book in the renowned African Writers Series, has been a widely acclaimed landmark, resulting in international recognition. Violence is a recurrent issue provoking literary engagement

¹⁴ The same applies to new historical research (Silvester, 2015), to which younger Namibian scholars made notable contributions.

¹⁵ Orford and Becker (2001), Vale (2008), Arich-Gertz (2010) and Winterfeldt and Vale (2011) added particular insights to the hitherto largely unexplored field, while the pre-independence 'frontier' literature was scrutinised by Haarhoff (1991a).

¹⁶ Discussed extensively in Chapter 3 of this volume.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion on Hiyalwa's novel, see Chapter 16 in this volume.

which is guided by a gendered awareness in other forms, and which gives this sad phenomenon a prominent place in response to a social anomie which characterises the Namibian reality (see Hakskeen, 2003, and Hasheela & Nghaamwa, 2009).¹⁸

Other forms of indirect documentary evidence through collections of literary and poetic narratives show the affinity of Namibians, and others living in Namibia, for expressing their emotions and awareness through short stories (Utley, 1991; Sister Namibia Collective, 1994; Haarhoff, 1996; Orford & Nicanor, 1996) and poetry (Namibia Young Writers Club, 1993; Haarhoff, 1997).¹⁹ In particular, articulation through poetry features prominently and more often in expressions which take avant garde forms, such as in performance poetry. This genre has been promoted most prominently by Kitso Poets (1998), Ama Poets, PAWN (Poets Against War, Violence and Nuclear Weapons),²⁰ and the Spoken Word²¹ initiatives. They have offered exchanges and inspiration (see Molapong, Warner & Winterfeldt, 2005; Molapong & Barr, 2005; Macaba, 2008; Ramphaga, 2009; Ellis, 2013; Molapong, 2014). Performances have provided, mainly the younger generation, with a means of coming to terms with the new social realities through poetic forms of expression. These were often improvised and impromptu on stage, and do not always have the accompanying printed results in a format which would allow inclusion in this overview.²²

Forms of theatre performances as part of Namibian cultural-political expressions, often remain without easy access to the dialogues in the plays through a lack of printed/published versions, and tend to be underrated. This chapter is unable to fill the gap. It should, however, at least be recognised that the South African-Namibian Frederick Philander, dubbed as a maverick (Schauffer, 2012), stands out in the landscape of local playwrights by his sheer productivity and creativity.²³ Compilations of other Namibian plays are the collections by Zeeman (2000, 2002).

CONCLUSION: POWER AND EMANCIPATION

As shown, more recent contributions towards the analyses of the Namibian social and political realities, summarise and critically reflect on developments since

¹⁸ Several more collections, among others initiated by Elizabeth lKhasas, contribute to this genre too. See also Chapter 17 in this volume.

¹⁹ Dorian Haarhoff played a pioneering role in support of giving voice to Namibian poetry while he was at the Windhoek Academy, later the University of Namibia. He has published his own poetry with many Namibian references (Haarhoff, 1991b, 1994).

²⁰ For the latter, see Kgobetsi (2000).

²¹ For a detailed discussion, see Chapter 8 of this volume.

²² For trends in poetry from the combat phase to the protest art since independence see Melber (2004), Winterfeldt (2005) and Vale (2008). This genre, including collections such as *Tales of Katutura* by Petrus Hakskeen, as well as other anthologies by this poet and others, might represent the most creative challenge of dominant narratives since independence, and testifies to a sub-culture seeking to explore new identities.

²³ Those plays accessible in printed versions include Philander (1990, 2005). He also published a collection of essays (Philander, 2012). For a detailed discussion on Philander, see Chapter 11, in this volume.

independence beyond the uncritical praise songs of a patriotic history which romanticises and idolises the fight for freedom. In doing so, they have challenged parts of the dominant narrative of the liberation movement now in political power and control – not only through scholarly lenses but as much, if not even more so, through the literary arts. While SWAPO's dominant narrative suggests that the struggle for independence has achieved a meaningful change for all people in most spheres of life, more sobering assessments present a more nuanced, or a different, perspective. It is noteworthy in this context, that to some extent the logistical problems facing the pre-independence literature in support of the liberation struggle now also confront the post-independence critical analyses, albeit to a lesser extent, namely through the lack of a supporting environment. Related to this, there are still few suitable opportunities to publish at home.

Adequate platforms for critical reflections are now almost completely confined to the daily, weekly and monthly print media, where opinion articles and regular columns allow the articulation of such analyses in almost unlimited and unrestricted ways. Columns as well as similar critical interventions in the independent daily, *The Namibian*, might be the most obvious evidence of this freedom of expression in practice. This clearly transcends the colonial limitations and testifies to the new democracy which has been established. Editorials and opinions in the daily *Namibian Sun*, the weekly *Windhoek Observer*, as well as articles in the state-owned daily *New Era* and in the independent monthly magazine, *Insight Namibia*, underline that post-colonial realities are an achievement in practising civil liberties. Not by coincidence, Namibia ranks at the top of all African countries in terms of media freedom.

There are not many social science journals for meaningful scholarly political and sociological debate inside the country which would merit recognition. The *Journal of Namibian Studies – History, Culture, Politics* as the only scholarly journal devoted exclusively to Namibian Studies, enjoys a high degree of commitment from scholars who are personally linked to the journal or are from Namibia. Since 2007 the journal has been published from Germany and continues to publish two issues a year, establishing itself as a noteworthy forum. Locally, the *Namibia Law Journal*, established in 2009 and published by the Namibia Law Journal Trust and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, is being revived after having been dormant for several years. The University's *Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, published since 2012 by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, mainly offers articles on matters not directly related to Namibian affairs and/or on subjects outside of the thematic focus of this chapter.

Publishing houses, which could promote a book culture, are rare and mainly limit their activities to commercial agendas. The Namibia Scientific Society (or the *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft*, which, *nomen est omen*, has been anchored in the German speaking minority) is one of the few institutionalised local agencies in Namibia with a wide range of books produced through Kuiseb Publishers. Its programme has, until recently, been confined to a less critical (if not outright apologetic) colonial history and the country's flora and fauna. Other commercial

publishers such as Longman Namibia and Gamsberg Macmillan (now Namibia Publishing House) have focused on textbook production. New Namibia Books, established at independence, had a slightly different, far more enlightened approach and has played an important role in independent publishing during the first decade of Namibian independence – only to opt out of business due to a lack of resources.²⁴ A welcome shift seems to be currently emerging with the formal establishment of UNAM Press, the scholarly publishing unit of the University of Namibia, in 2012, as well as Wordweaver, a smaller publishing house established in 2012 as Namibia's first fiction publisher, which made another promising appearance on the book market, creating space for local creative writing. Since then, its founder has left and established Martial Publishing, a new enterprise, in 2016.

These publishing houses neither support non-conformist approaches nor serve the purposes of a limited target group with specific interests vested in a critical analysis of the current society. Lacking committed and potent independent publishing houses who could afford to provide a both politically and economically uncompromising forum for critical analyses, the publishing sector in Namibia remains to a large extent a marginal factor within the progressive spheres of civil society.

Unfortunately, publishing critical literature in Namibia does not pay in the direct material sense of the word and requires an investment which yields no financial returns against which a lucrative business would be measured. The market forces at play are therefore, a contributing factor, hampering the promotion of such publishing activities. Publishers generating profits through the textbook market possibly could have the capacity to invest in the odd critical book without being dependent upon its returns. The absence of such books, however, indicates that they would most likely not want to spoil their chances for receiving the next order from the state authorities for the large run of another textbook. As a result, publishing opportunities for critical analyses or sound academic studies (which often do not find a wider audience, but are essential to build a local knowledge base also for generations to come) have remained rare and continue mainly to take place abroad. For example, and most prominently, the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB) in Switzerland, which has already set high standards for the publishing of Namibiana, thanks to the generosity of the late Carl Schlettwein. The BAB, and for some time, P. Schlettwein Publishers have been able to make most of the relevant academic literature by Namibian authors accessible since independence.

Several research institutions and civil society agencies have during the past 27 years tried to some extent, to fill the vacuum through the publishing of their own policy-related analyses. During the first years of independence, the Multi-Disciplinary Research Centre (MRC) at the University of Namibia had contributed to such literature with relevant academic in-depth studies. For a time it then gradually shifted the emphasis of its research more towards rather pragmatic micro-studies, often having the nature of consultancies. More recently, the academic orientation has been reinforced and the scholarly profile much returned to the earlier academic

²⁴ See Chapter 22 of this volume.

standard. Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU), a semi-autonomous think-tank established at independence, (which was closed in 2010), has published a variety of critical analyses during the 1990s. Some of the projects of the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID), the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Labour Research and Resource Institute (LaRRI), as well as the advocacy role of the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), were (and in some cases remain) similarly critical. They are all confronted, however, with the harsh realities of donor-funded dependency and are constantly forced to struggle for survival while at the same time maintaining their relevance.²⁵

Namibian authors, especially scholars who are willing to embark on a critical examination of post-colonial realities, remain confronted with the challenge of finding suitable opportunities to publish. Their role is as relevant as in any other given society, and the responses from the sphere of politics testify to the fact that they are considered a force to be taken seriously. The insults hurled at some of them for their civic courage to question progress publically, combined with a refusal to accept the scholars as a necessary, integral, section of a vibrant civil society, testifies to a deep-rooted suspicion towards scholarly motivated interventions. Overtly harsh responses to criticism by some policy makers, party activists and higher-ranking civil servants, border on anti-intellectualism. Marginalising and ridiculing those who articulate dissenting views, confirms a narrow-mindedness which is anchored in the arrogance of power, void of any ability for self-critical reflections.

These offensive responses resonate with the experiences of different times and societies, albeit on a harmless level, without any direct consequences for the physical integrity of the targeted individuals. Criticism through the spoken and written word has often been targeted. The more authoritarian societies are, the more dissenting voices are at risk. While far from similar circumstances, the following story nonetheless reminds us of the power of the word, recalling the inscription on the ruler from my Windhoek school days quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that knowledge is power:

After the Hungarian rebellion of 1956 was crushed by the Russian tanks, Georg Lukács (who participated in the Imre Nagy government) was taken prisoner; when a KGB officer asked him if he had a weapon, Lukács calmly reached into his pocket and handed over his pen. (Žizek, 2002, p. 12)

The experiences among the Namibian community fighting foreign rule during the anti-colonial struggle are perfectly symbolised by a simple sentence in Diescho's novel *Born of the Sun*,²⁶ an analogy to Žizek's anecdote on the Hungarian intellectual Georg Lukács. While on contract in a South African mine compound, the novel's main character, Muronga, acquires basic skills in reading and writing. In his first letter

²⁵ The IPPR's history documents that it is indeed possible to face serious constraints and then recover to become a leading think tank even by continental standards.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion on Diescho's novel see Chapter 4 of this volume.

to his wife back home he notes: 'It is good to hold a pen. It is like a gun.' (Diescho, 1988, p. 260). Such rebel writers are about to surface in challenging the limits to liberation in support of and as evidence of, the continued struggle for emancipation to ensure further social justice and equality among the Namibian people.²⁷ This volume suggests that such a generation is in the making.

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²⁷ The angry polemics published by Job Amupanda (2014) in local newspapers might be one of the first eruptions of this kind.

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2

Gathering scattered archives

Margie Orford

INTRODUCTION

My work is an empirical archive work. Little research has been done on literary production in Namibia, and less on women's creativity and past textual fashioning. Presented here are materials that I and others have researched over the past few years. In this chapter, I speculate about how one does such work and how one 'remembers' a past which is invisible, apart from faint traces left in the margins of other people's stories. I focus on women's writing because its deployment in the colonial and post-colonial states affects women and men differently. The interaction of women with the colonial state, and hence with the written archive, is often made visible, from the perspective of the archive, around issues of sexual regulation and the exclusion of women as agents from the public realm.

Several theoretical problems, as yet unresolved, have emerged from this research. The first question hinges on the convenience of the terms used to describe the periods of African history: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. Although the reasons that these terms are used are obvious and useful for describing historical phases, their very convenience can sometimes mask continuities which have existed. The usage implies that the colonial period remains the defining centre, consigning the so-called 'pre-colonial' period to the past and projecting the post-colonial period into the future. These neatly packaged periods of time and associated ideology are not always appropriate when examining history from the perspective of women who have experienced the patriarchal structures of indigenous and colonial cultures differently and were, or are socially inscribed in different ways from men.

The second problem is the sources of texts by Namibian women. This requires a review of the politics of archival retrieval and fits into the realm of subaltern studies and feminist literary retrieval. I look in some detail at the challenges which the colonial archive poses and discuss other sources – what I have called living archives. In general, these are the memories of people and the oral traditions which have been resistant to and have been excluded from the historical archives. I then examine three clusters of texts and how women have fashioned a sense of themselves and others in their texts, and how the regulation and domestication of women have come into play in the colonial context.

1. The first texts are from the middle of the 19th Century and are letters and fables written by one of Namibia's earliest Christian converts, Urieta Kazahendike.
2. The second set is a cluster of texts from the 1930s and the colonial documents which surround them. These are about the regulation of the mobility of women and the harnessing of the productive and reproductive labour power of women by the colonial state. It is also here that one sees women organising as women and articulating themselves as political, gendered agents.
3. The last texts are the novels and autobiographies which have been published after Namibia's independence in 1990 as women have tried to engage with the realities of a post-colonial state and their complex position within that situation.

The Ancient Greek historian, Herodotus 'did not have at his disposal a word for history ... the word he used has a double meaning, namely, to testify and to enquire' (Arendt, 2007, p. 308). In this spirit of enquiry, the post-colonial imperative has prised open sources 'to testify and enquire'. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how women fashioned themselves and transformed their experience of colonial violence into recorded resistance – dreaming, singing, speaking and writing. I explore the embodied agency of colonial subjects as it appears in archival texts and recently published Namibian literature. Toni Morrison's description of her writing is germane to this kind of research, which requires an imaginative empathy to one's subject: 'It's a kind of literary archeology. On the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct a world that these remains imply' (Morrison, 1988, p. 192).

Assia Djebar describes *Fantasia, an Algerian cavalcade*, as an intervention of 'nomad memory and intermittent voice' (Djebar, 1993, p. 226). I carry that phrase to another desert country to illuminate the fragments of history and memory which are part of women's fashioning of self and nation in Namibia. This is a 'nomad memory' because the search for these fragments requires a complex journey through scattered archives housed in Windhoek, Cape Town, London, Finland, Germany, as well as in the memories of people who were repeatedly exiled and returned; an 'intermittent voice' because the written and oral testimonies which have endured are fractured, and buried, often only an echo which has survived in the hostile colonial texts. The 'intermittent voice' which has left a trace of subjugated experience is a nourishing source for the work of contemporary women writers who also draw on

archives outside of those which were established by colonial administrations. These are the living archives of the heart, of personal memory, of orality, where memory, narratives and lyrics have found refuge in forms which have endured beyond the appropriating reach of colonial discourse.²⁸

The relationship between written and spoken texts and memories is intimately braided with the authors' contexts, as are the forms of resistance invoked and agency exercised when writers choose forms of address.²⁹ The asymmetry of writing and orality is expressed by an Oshiwambo oral poet, Meekulu Mukwahongo Ester Kamati, who describes her poetry as a weaving of traditional forms, her own thoughts, and what she observes in the world. Although her work has remained firmly in the realm of orature (she says 'my mind is my book'), her wish is that her poetry will be passed on in a printed form so 'that future generations have their own literature to which to relate.'

Although I do not wish to imply a static opposition between orality and literacy or a linear progression from the one to the other, the continued privileging of writing as the repository of cultural continuity, certainly marks the future of many post-colonial states. Individuals however, can and do occupy multiple identities and modes of speaking. Exercising a choice about whether to write, to recite, to speak or to be silent, is often an exercise in agency. This is, of course, part of an economic as well as a cultural logic. Because of the exigencies of war, post-independence poverty and limited markets, African publishers rarely invest in literature. A discussion of literature, technology and poverty is beyond the scope of this chapter but as I discuss the deployment of 'archives', institutional and personal, the colonials which cluster around the politics of language, literature and orature, will return.

SITUATING ARCHIVES

Colonialism and post-colonialism: these terms draw with them an overwhelming narrative of violent spatial mapping and surveillance of both landscapes and bodies. Valentin Mudimbe argues, while cautioning against generalisation, that 'colonialism and colonisation mean organisation, arrangement' (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 1). Colonialism is deeply partisan in how it organises speech and silence, social excisions and incisions, home and homelessness. The reorganisation of knowledge for the redistribution of power is one of the most visible aspects of the colonial, and increasingly post-colonial, political arrangement, where indigenous knowledge systems are displaced and then replaced by a new imperial order. Reading (or hearing) the voices of marginalised people, in this case, women, can reveal how, and at what cost, that organisation is inscribed. Many conflicts are played out in and through women's bodies and are made visible in how female bodies are perceived and appropriated by the culture in which they live. The expression of the female bodily and social experience, and the female desire, are vital revisions of colonialism and post-colonialism.

²⁸ See a more detailed discussion of this in Orford and Becker (2001).

²⁹ Isabel Hofmeyr provides a much nuanced discussion of this in Hofmeyr (2000).

The nature of 'archives', to which Western historians have turned in the search of their own histories' counter-memories, needs a careful evaluation in a post-colonial state. Archives, in languages which trace their etymology back to ancient Greece, are 'public records, from *arche* (Gr) the beginning, magistracy. 1) a place where public records, documents, etc. are kept; and, 2) the public records, documents, etc. which are kept in such a place' (Merriam-Webster, 1993). Archives carry with them doubling: They are both place and word. They are both official storage sites of recorded memory: transcripts, diaries, letters, recorded fragments of voice and image, visible for those who might wish to see them, and the site of memory itself. This doubleness, the dissembling nature of archives, is elaborated by Jacques Derrida: 'There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition and without a certain exteriority.' (Derrida, 1995, p. 57). It was to this exteriority of archives, the place of memory and counter-memory that Michel Foucault turned to excavate the shifting discourses of European history.³⁰ There are, however, important differences between metropolitan or imperial archives and peripheral, colonial archives like those of Namibia (Richards, 1993).

These differences pertain to the collections themselves, the original purpose in establishing colonial archives, as well as the resistance to the archiving of indigenous speech and memory. Namibia, like other places, has experienced multiple and distinct colonialisms which sought to represent, to archive themselves, in different ways.³¹ This is evident in the Namibian National Archives, set up to preserve official documents from the administration of the territory and representing the range of colonial languages: German, English and Afrikaans. Namibia's indigenous languages of over 30, as spoken by a population of 1.5 million (now 2.4 million), are hardly represented. A brief summary of the advancement of colonialism in the country provides historical context to the preservation of official archives and the neglect of indigenous voices.

The first significant body of written archival records for Namibia stem from the early 19th Century missionaries and traders who had an increasing impact on the social structures of indigenous people. Some missionaries developed orthographies for several indigenous languages and taught literacy. The northern region of the country where the different Aawambo polities resided remained only marginally affected by these developments but was subject to informal colonial penetration which intensified the trade and missionary presence (Williams, 1991). German colonial rule in the territory was tenuously established in 1884 with the declaration of the protectorate of German South West Africa and consolidated only in 1907 after a period of intense and

³⁰ As Patrick Hutton summarises: 'From hermeneutical interest in the collective memories which traditions perpetuated Foucault shifted attention to counter-memories: the discursive practices through which memories are perpetually revised. The archive of history, he explained, is not a repository of facts underpinning intellectual traditions but rather an inventory of countless discursive practices through which these traditions have been refashioned along the way'. (Hutton, 1993, p. 113)

³¹ 1918, for instance, saw the publication of the Union of South Africa's *Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany* which became known as the *1918 Blue Book*. The new British/South African administration documented the colonial brutality of the defeated Germans and raised Namibian (particularly Ovaherero) hopes of restitution and fair treatment.

prolonged conflict in the centre and south ending in the genocide of the Ovaherero and Nama people (Silvester, Wallace, Hartmann, & Hayes, 1998). The German colonial period ended in 1915 after the start of World War II with the invasion of South African troops allied to Britain. The country was administered by South Africa as a (contested) United Nation's mandated territory until its independence in 1990.

Indigenous memory and history came under sustained assault by the colonial state as pre-colonial economies and polities were eroded, land was appropriated and labour migrants were created by enforced cash taxation by the colonial authorities. The challenges of tracing these excluded histories in the archives are evident in *The colonizing camera: Photographs in the making of Namibian history*:

The flaws in the Namibian photograph archive, point directly to one of the most interesting broader features of this peripheral territory's colonial history: that processes of producing knowledge here were very strained and ambivalent and did not necessarily feed into the colony itself. For the archive, applying 'Foucault in Africa' is tricky. ... The Namibian archive suggests that the circuits of power and knowledge are plainly running on different courses and greatly complicated by the peculiar 'tensions of empire' generated in this part of southern Africa. (Hartmann, Silvester, & Hayes, 1999, p. 7)

The problem of locating the sites of memory, is most evident when we turn to the indigenous Namibian languages to find words which describe the places where history and memory are stored. There is no word for those ideas in the three widely spoken Namibian languages. If one asks for a translation of 'archive', people refer to the elderly as keepers of information or the people to consult for information. In Otjiherero, there are several words which are used to describe an archive: *onogo*, (expert); *ondoka*, (he is clever – he saw danger coming and put an obstacle in the way); *omuserekarere*, (storyteller, someone who you can ask about things); *omujorokise* (entertainer, someone who can make you laugh). In Oshiwambo, the word used refers to a place, Oniipa, which was where there was a mission printing press and where records were kept. (As a side note, the churches frequently served as counter-memories and as authoritative witnesses against the South African apartheid: Oniipa was bombed and destroyed three times by the South African army.)

These 'living archives' are as likely to be women or men. Recent work done in Owambo confirms that women are often perceived as the custodians of oral history and tradition. Although it is often men who 'front' the telling of stories to visitors it is, in fact, the women who sit around the *olupale* (the social heart of the homestead) and pass on the stories. It would appear that the 'official history' often resides with men and deep personal storytelling is the domain of the women. The colonial archive constructs an almost exclusively masculine discourse, a discourse which is more often than not created out of the familiar tropes of female silence and a controlling male gaze. This is particularly apparent in the visual records where '... contrary to their absence in documentary archives, this [photographic collection] is where women

are given high-profile visibility and are visually marked as the bearers of the culture which becomes increasingly important for Hahn [a quintessential colonial official] to lock up in time and space.' (Hayes in Hartmann et al., 1999, p. 178).

In 1959, the Red Nation of the Nama people smuggled a petition to the United Nations, protesting the forced removals from their ancestral lands. The traumatic dislocation of the polity which experiences territorial excision, is expressed here as a bodily experience of dismemberment and silencing. The central image of this collective document is of a body which is intentionally violated and estranged from its home. This trope of violent estrangement, and the recuperation of the body, individual and social, is where I would like to focus attention.

'We perish!!!

Most honourable members. How is it possible for a person from Union, England or elsewhere, to tell the one on whose place he came, and to situate around him, and become millionaire with his underpaid handwork, multiply your brethren round him, take away his land, deny him the privilege of education to keep him in eternal ignorance and servitude, take away his rights and *make him a blind, deaf-and-dumb voiceless creature, and afterwards tell him 'You did not originate here' and 'you are a black spot'?* Our country has gone to strangers and they have become heirs and originals of it. (First, 1963, p. 147)

Territorially colonialism, in its varied and contested forms, is the process of silencing and 'un-homing', of making its settlers and administrators 'heirs and originals' in violently appropriated lands. These territorial acquisitions, however, are performed in the theatre of individual and social bodies which had prior claim to the lands seized. As the Red Nation's address to the UN indicated so powerfully, the taking away of rights and land resulted in the creation of '*... a blind, deaf-and-dumb voiceless creature ...*' An erasure of the possibility of speech by the erasure of location, enables the coloniser to claim the origins of the colonised and to erase his memory. The trauma of this erasure is made manifest in the suffering of the body which authors or authenticates the Red Nation's plea.

Namibia's history, particularly during the periods of colonial consolidation, is one of violent conflict, social disruption, migration and persecution (Hillebrecht, 1990). These conditions are not conducive to the preservation of written records, particularly the records of indigenous women who, to all intents and purposes, were textually 'invisible' to both the German and South African colonial forces except for the brief moments where their presence tore the taut surface of colonial discourse. Writing a history of the margins can be a process of revealing how power was distributed in and through subject bodies in the past. By reflecting on women's subjectivity, the masculine and colonial gaze is unsettled and 'time and space' can be unlocked and reinterpreted. Tracing a history of women and writing shifts inequity and silence from the eternal, thus opening new possibilities, political and imaginary, in the present.

'IT ALMOST HAPPENED, THEN THERE WAS ...' URIETA AND KAMBAURUMA KAZAHENDIKE

Ovaherero tales are called *Ovimbaharere/ Ovipaharere*, which means 'things that almost happened', and usually start with *A'pehara, otjipari* ... which means 'It almost happened, then there was. ...' This implication of curtailed potential is what I foreground in the first texts I present. These are Ovaherero fables and histories, and a letter which was written in the mid-19th Century by two sisters, Urieta and Kambauruma Kazahendike and some other young women who were among the first authors and orthographers of the Otjiherero language.³²

The fables 'Two Lions who changed themselves into humans and married two Ovaherero girls,' 'The good mannered and the bad mannered ghost,' and 'The strong elephant and the weak tortoise,' give a fascinating insight into normative values which women negotiated and tested. The collection provides a unique insight into the pre-colonial experiences of Ovaherero women. The stories describe women herding goats, taking risks; women making fools of their social relations; testing the bounds of authority by taking decisions independently from the family and getting into danger, only to be rescued by the help of the ancestors, the father, a shrewd sister or a mother-in-law. They also describe the complex gender relations of polygamous households, childbirth in unbearable situations, travel to far away Owambo, women living alone whilst their men are out in the veld, women protecting their herds against poachers and thieves. Apparent in these stories are the active, varied lives of these women despite the dangers of war and drought which were a part of the lives of pastoralists. The camaraderie and independence is in marked contrast to constructions of gender insistent on female domesticity and passivity which were imposed during the colonial period.

The fragmentary writing of Urieta Kazahendike (1838 to 1937) provides an invaluable trace of how encroaching colonialism affected those who were drawn into the orbit of the missionaries, frequently the thin edge of the colonial wedge. Kazahendike spoke Dutch, German, English and Nama in addition to her mother tongue, Otjiherero. Several of her letters were preserved in mission archives along with the histories and fables she wrote with her sister and friends in the 1860s. Most surviving information about the life of Urieta Kazahendike, however, has been filtered

³² The first Ovaherero who started to write, around the 1860s, were women. One of them was Johanna Kazahendike, another was her sister Magdalena. A few others did so as well and we know about them because they wrote letters and legends. The legends as written down by these young women, who stayed at the Cape or in Germany for training and to do language work for the missionaries, were published partly by P. Heinrich Brincker: *Woerterbuch und kurzgefasste Gramatik des Otji-Herero*, Leipzig 1886, Annex. A full manuscript of the legends is housed in the UCT archives, The Hahn Collection. In 1862, the Cape philologist Bleek wrote that he received 'five legends in oTji-herero [sic], or (the) Damara language as written down by natives, copied and accompanied by a translation by the Rev. J. Rath'. According to Brincker, the reference to 'natives' was in fact to 'a Herero girl', most possibly Magdalena (or Kambauruma) Kazahendike. A few legends published elsewhere were written down by her sister Johanna. (Daymond et al., 2003, p. 124).

through the viewpoints of white missionaries, explorers and ethnographers. This gendered process of exclusion which shifted Kazahendike from subject to subject of the writing of others, is a familiar colonial trope. It remains something to be considered carefully when writing post-colonial histories.

Kazahendike first encountered the missionaries Emma and Hugo Hahn, who came to Namibia in 1844, at their mission station when she was about eight years old. She worked there as an unpaid domestic servant and later as a teacher. Kazahendike was instrumental in the translation of religious material from German into Otjiherero. She also provided invaluable and unacknowledged assistance to Carl Hugo Hahn on an Otjiherero–German grammar and dictionary, for which he later received an honorary doctorate.³³

In 1858, Hahn baptised Urieta as the first Christian convert among the Ovaherero, and she was renamed Johanna Maria from that point. The missionaries were slow to win over converts, and Hahn was hard-pressed to persuade the Rhenish mission society to allow him to continue his evangelising efforts. The Hahns made a trip to Germany in 1860 and Johanna accompanied them, unaware that she would be quite literally exhibited at religious meetings in Germany as living proof that Hahn's missionary work in Africa had borne fruit. These popular rallies were successful fund-raisers, despite the fact that Johanna was one of only three Ovaherero converts at that stage. Hugo Hahn wrote without more detail that Johanna was subjected to many indecencies during her visit to Germany, raising the unhappy spectre of Sara Baartman, the Hottentot Venus (Crais, & Scully, 2009). The Hahns arranged that Johanna would return to Namibia with another missionary party in 1861, ostensibly for health reasons. Emma Hahn recounts Johanna's departure and the receipt of her letter as follows:

... Johanna is now on her way back to her native land, that is, she left us on Wednesday and will proceed with a missionary who is going out from Barmen and 3 brides to Amsterdam, where they will embark in the beginning of next month. Hugo took her to Barmen and I have had a letter from him this evening in which he tells me that it is Dr Fabri's wish that he should accompany the party to Amsterdam and see the ship, which is just what I had wished as I could not bear the thought of the poor girl leaving us without one or the other of us accompanying her to the vessel. She sent me also a few lines with Hugo's, in which the expressions of affection for me are quite affecting. She will, however, be happier in Africa, and I hope her visit to this country will not have been without a blessing to her, although she did not find everything and everybody so good as she had at first expected. (Guedes, 1992)

³³ Lau, B. (1995). *History and Historiography 4 essays* (Reprint). Windhoek: Discourse/MSORP publication.

The letter³⁴ that Urieta Kazahendike wrote after 'she did not find everything and everybody so good as she had first expected,' is very moving but it reads better perhaps if one applies Toni Morrison's 'literary archeology' to see what the 'remains imply'.

This letter speaks to the trauma suffered by Kazahendike, despite the conventional religious phrasing of parts of it. The second paragraph does not sit comfortably with the general tone. The direct address: '*I want to tell you something*' draws attention to her own act of writing and the trauma induced by her dislocation:

I want to tell you something. The night after the day I left you, my heart was heavy when I lay down to sleep. I prayed and fell asleep. During the night I screamed loudly in my sleep and woke up; but it was a dream and I was glad that it was only a dream. Then I fell asleep again and I heard a voice which said to me: Don't cry for behold you have prayed that you want to be comforted.³⁵

At the heart of this letter is a nightmare which cannot be narrated. This nightmare is the referent against which the sedate Christian platitudes which fill the rest of the letter must be read. This dream, dreamt after a visit to some industrious blind children, speaks of the fear and loneliness Kazahendike felt, but which were apparently impossible for her to speak of directly. Kazahendike prays to be comforted. Her style draws attention to the centrality of her body, her body as a text within her letter – the vulnerable and sleeping body, jerking awake in the dark, alone. Above her bed, however, and written of before her nightmare, is a bookshelf, a 'board for the books here, just like over there'. I imagine those books to be both shielding her with their familiarity as she wakes, and threatening her. In the longer trajectory of Namibia's colonial history, books and writing provided a place where the fragmentation of the self triggered by colonialism could be partially healed through anti-colonial and then post-colonial writing, through books. This image – the nightmare and the books, the direct address that the power of the pen enables, and what the dislocation of being able to write meant to Urieta – brings to mind Gayatri Spivak's controversial comment on education in *A critique of postcolonial reason*.

'... many of the functionaries of the civilizing mission of imperialism were well-meaning ... in fact what these functionaries gave was often what I call an enabling violation – a rape that produces a healthy child, whose existence cannot be advanced as a justification for the rape.' (Spivak, 1999, p. 371)

³⁴ An additional corpus of womens' experiences are the roughly 30 letters from the first generation of christianised Ovaherero women (including Urieta and Magdalena) from various mission stations in central Namibia in the 1880s and 1890s. They are mostly directed to missionaries and they talk of their lives and concerns (social, personal and religious). Most of the letters are in Otjiherero and are scattered in archives in Windhoek, Cape Town, Wuppertal (Germany), (Dag Henrichson, pers comm.).

³⁵ See p. 48 for the complete letter.

Berichte 1861

God's Peace and Blessing be with you.

Beloved in God.

Today I went to the home of the blind and was astonished to see their work, because it was more beautiful than the work of people who can see. Stockings and other items which they had made were very neat. When they displayed their happiness, however, my heart was filled with mourning. They can also sing very well and two boys played four-handed on the piano. The girls also sing very well. *Now I am staying with Mr Oostmeyer and the tiny bedroom in which I sleep is very similar in size to the one in Gatersloh; I also have a similar board for the books here, just like over there. God has helped me and consoled my heart and dried my tears, and I thank Him, that He in His mercy has strengthened me.*

I want to tell you something. The night after the day I left you, my heart was heavy when I lay down to sleep. I prayed and fell asleep. During the night I screamed loudly in my sleep and woke up; but it was a dream and I was glad that it was only a dream. Then I fell asleep again and I heard a voice which said to me: Don't cry, for behold you have prayed that you want to be comforted.

Well, Jesus has given me strength, and not only today. He will always give it, if I just surrender myself to Him. He is always nearby; He is my leader in death and in life. He satisfies my hunger and thirst. Jesus, make me hunger and thirst for You and for Your word. Jesus, feed me and quench my thirst with Your wounds and Your death. Jesus Christ, in Your great mercy, take me and hold me. You who are the same yesterday and today, in eternity and in splendour. May He hold you and me. Amen.

I thank you very much, dear teacher, for your letter which made me very happy. I received it while I was busy writing to all of you. Yes, I shall always think of you and put myself in the hands of God, and take my refuge, like a child with its mother, in Him in all things.

At the beginning I was very frightened at the thought of the ship; but now I have put myself in the hands of God and I can say: Jesus, do whatever You please, just let me believe and deliver me from evil. Amen.

Farewell, very beloved in God. God bless you in Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom we have salvation, redemption and forgiveness of all our sins. Give my regards to everyone I know, the widows etc. etc.; also in Barmen in the children's and mission home. The brides send their regards.

I have forgotten to tell you that I received some written words (by the blind people) when I went to the home of the blind. I am sending them to you. Farewell again and stay very, very well.

I am your servant, Johanna Scheudeke. [Urieta Kazahendike]

In 1864, Kazahendike married a widower with eight children, missionary Hahn's choice of husband for her and not her own, and bore nine children. After her husband's death she worked for many years as a midwife and pharmacist, receiving much praise for her skills. No other writings of hers have been found, although she was interviewed extensively before she died at the age of 99. Shortly after Johanna's death in 1936, a missionary inspector wrote a tribute to her, praising her Christianity and emphasising above all, her self-effacing nature: 'How superior she was. She still remained simple. She never made anything of herself. She always lived quietly in the country ... If we had more of this kind of woman, the question in regard to women would be solved.' I doubt he had read the wildly adventurous fables she had written in her youth, but his address was to the present not to the past. In 1936, the 'question in regard to women', the questions being asked by women, were crucial to the colonial attempts at the regulation of the mobility of women and the access of labour power through taxation.

1930s: CONTESTING THE BODY

Women's testimony only forces its way into colonial record, and thus into its discourse, in moments of extreme crisis for those women. Several texts from the 1930s which documented women's resistance to forced vaginal examinations in urban areas, have survived in the archives as have texts protesting such conditions in the reserves. The speculative colonial gaze, condensed literally to the white doctor's speculum, was violently resisted and the laws enforcing examinations lapsed. I have traced these events through archive documents, not through the oral histories which have been collected recently, so that I could map out how women were excised from colonial discourses which attempted to keep women in the rural reserves and draw men into towns as migrant labourers. I also wished to explore the complex links between race and gender which emerged around an increasingly pathologised concept of sexuality.

The acquisitive gaze which 'saw' and then appropriated the virgin territory, was implicated in the gaze which sought to control and regulate the bodies of colonial subjects. Women's bodies, figured as the site of the domestic, the intimate, the quintessence of home, were scrutinised by this gaze in particular ways. Homi Bhabha argues that:

The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorientating. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 13)

Colonial gender systems were constructed through attempts at the control of (female) bodies as much as on territorial divisions, as will be seen in the texts discussed below. These texts have emerged out of the establishment of 'native reserves' and the invasive treatment of women's bodies by the colonial authority. The reserves set up in the eastern and western regions of central Namibia, were the South African response

to the widespread expectations amongst the Ovaherero that their ancestral lands, expropriated by the Germans, would be restored to them. They also fulfilled 'the labour demand on the farms and mines and in towns' (Silvester, Wallace, Hartmann, & Hayes, 1998, p. 152). The destructive social effects of the reserve system are well documented but the dissolution of tradition which resulted from men and increasing numbers of young people being forced to find employment outside of the reserves, had severe consequences for the status of women.

NATION IS GOING TO RUINATION³⁶

On 17 October 1936, a deputation of about 60 Ovaherero women presented and read two letters to the Superintendent of the Waterberg East Native Reserve.

Title: Nation is going to ruination

by Unangoroa Maherero, Louisa Kambazembi, Edla Maherero, Augusta Kambazembi, Magdalina Katjimune and Hester Keha

Meeting of Herero Native Women: W.E.N. Reserve

[On the 17th of October 1936, a deputation of approximately 60 Herero women came to my office headed by native women Unangoroa Maherero, Louise Kambazembi, Edla Naherero, Augusta Kambazembi, Magdalina Katjimune and Hester Keha. They produced and read a letter, the following of which is a translation.]

The first thing is that we wish to call the Biggest doctor to come and find out the persons who poison us, a doctor that can locate poison.

The second point is that the men should marry – all men from 30 years of age and who are still single should be forced to get married – single men who have reached that age and refuse to get married should be taxed. A Bachelor Tax of £1 per month should be brought into force to serve as a remembrance for them to marry.

The third point: The men living and cohabiting with women to who they are not married and refuse to marry, the parents or relatives must take the woman away from the man within three or four days.

The fourth point: The man responsible for a pregnant woman should be forced to marry the woman, if he refuses, he should be made to pay three cows and calves to the woman.

The fifth point: Beer should not be allowed, the man who drinks beer must go to the white peoples' country and drink there but not in the reserve.

The sixth. Young boys and girls must not associate with each other – this must stop.

These things that we have written God and the law must help us. Nation is going to ruination,

I am Unangoroa Maherero. Louisa Kambazembi. Edla Maherero, Augusta Kambazembo. Magdaline Katjimune & Hester Keha.

³⁶ NAN: SWAA 1: 49. 158/23/2. Daymond et al., (2003)

Okakarara
16/10/36

We come to tell the Superintendent that the law and habits that God has given to us, our grandparents, is that each man lived with his brother and family and looked after their children, sons and daughters until they married. There was not one that got illegitimate child, only after marriage did they have children. Out of every hundred women, there are only two that have no children. Young girls who became pregnant before marriage were looked upon with disgust by their parents and family.

The man's parents also looked upon him with disgust. He is also told to marry the girl.

In the earlier days people lived up to 60 & 70, 80 or 100 years.

If a person is 2 years old or 60 years old and becomes ill, a witchdoctor is called in to diagnose the case and if he discovers that some person has "bewitched" the patient, that person is caught and given a good thrashing and he is called upon to assist the patient until he recovers.

This old custom of ours is now abolished since the time the Germans captured us up to the present it has been stopped. We have seen many bad deaths.

When a person dies today it takes only a few minutes before the body falls to pieces and this thing which happens so soon after death is a new thing to us and has been introduced by the White people by bringing into this country other native people.

We now wish for a good proper Doctor, so that we can call all the people together and discover what people have poison in their bodies and who "bewitched" the other people.

We wish to have a "Black Doctor" and not a white man Doctor.

Questioned by W.O.: We wish to have a qualified native doctor trained according to the European customs.

Informed that according to my knowledge there are no qualified Herero doctors, but that there are Zulus and coloured men who are qualified medical practitioners.

Answer: We want any one of these people to investigate the presence of poison amongst our people.

By W. O.: Do you know that the case in which Eleke was suspected was investigated by the District Surgoen [sic] and that a post-mortem examination was held and nothing disclosed.

Answer: We have heard.

Question: In the event of an un-married woman who has given birth to an illegitimate child refuses to marry the responsible man – what will be your attitude then?

Answer: This man must pay in any case.

Question: You say a Bachelor Tax of £1 per month must be enforced on all un-married men from 30 years to 60 years. Supposing the party concerned does not earn [more] than 10/- per month, what do you propose doing then.

Answer: He must pay or leave the Reserve we don't want him here.

These texts of protest have survived only in the translation of official documentation. Six influential women, Unangoroa Maherero, Louisa Kambazembi, Edla Maherero, Augusta Kambazembi, Magdalena Katjimune and Hester Keha, spoke on behalf of the men and women in their community.

In the Waterberg East Women's Petition of 1936, women were protesting against the increasing pressure placed on them, as custodians of the family and of children, by the rapidly changing gender relations which were induced by migrant labour (Kruger, 1996). The women demanded redress from the colonial administration from increasing alcohol abuse, illegitimacy and promiscuity as they endured these problems as custodians of the family. These symptoms of moral and social disintegration also eroded their own sources of power and control. The women demanded solutions to this social 'poison'. The first was for the 'Biggest doctor' or 'prophet healer' who would 'investigate the presence of poison among our people'. Their second was for a greatly increased, coercive power, a Bachelor's tax, over the sexual behaviour of men. These demands indicated that the increasing gender imbalances which were created in the reserves, were a major source of a social conflict and breakdown. Their concluding statement, 'These things we have written. God and the law must help us. Nation is going to ruination', marks the confident entry of women into the public discourse of the Ovaherero nationalism which emerged during the 1920s and 30s.

The women's protests caused an official flurry. The first official commented that, 'There is matter for thought (in their demands), but as it is bad enough dealing with the male population, one wonders what is going to happen and where it is going to end when these "lady suffragettes" become the dictators of the reserves.' It is clear from the correspondence surrounding the letter of protest, 'Nation is going to Ruination', that the colonial officials did not find the women's demands unacceptable *per se*. What caused such deep distress was that these women asserted so uncompromisingly their right to speak, not only for themselves but for their 'nation' – a realm of discourse perceived to be male. This assessment was not consistent with the events. The Ovaherero men present were content that the women should speak on their behalf and for the 'nation'. In the hostile, and perplexed, words of the magistrate who presided:

My reason for requiring the Reserve Board members and the headmen to be present was the unprecedented direct approach by the women ... *I wished them to realise that their grievances should be voiced through their men and that the Administration is not prepared to recognise the women as a channel for conveying official communication* [own emphasis]. What the men themselves wanted but were afraid to ask for, they had no objection to their women folk asking for, no matter what loss of authority to them such a course entailed. (SWAA 1149 A.158/23/2, see Daymond et al., 2003, pp. 209–211)

No compromise could be reached as the Administration refused to allow a witch-doctor to practise in the reserve but far from acquiescing, the women made it clear

that it seemed that they had no alternative but to take the law into their own hands by locating and thrashing the person who bewitched them. It is not known if any thrashing took place but the protesting women were to reappear in 1939 when the 'poison' was to return with a vengeance.

By 1939, the Administration of South West Africa had 'introduced periodic, compulsory examinations of unmarried black women for venereal diseases in the urban areas' (SWAA 1149 A.158/23/2). Women's interaction with the colonial state, and hence with the written archive, was often made visible, from the perspective of the archive, around issues of sexual regulation and the exclusion of women as agents from the public realm. Several theoretical problems, as yet unresolved, have emerged from this research. The first question hinges on the convenience of the terms used to describe Natalia Kaheke and Andeline Kathea. Despite Mrs Bowker's patronising and ambivalent attempts to place their discussion within the common ground of their sex, the women remained adamant that they were speaking on behalf of the women of their community and that the cultural gulf between them and Mrs Bowker was not to be bridged. Natalia Kaheke explains this:

... The Almighty God has created nations differently. For instance madam sits here without a head dress but we are wearing it ... Madam, please follow us. We say this bodily examination is a very hard thing for us – very hard. For instance madam, your husband may enter this room and if he so desires he will kiss you in our presence, which is a thing which is not done by our nation. By that it is not to say that we do not love our husbands – it is the custom of our nation that such customs are regarded by our nation as confidential matters to be kept in secrecy. (SWAA 1149 A.158/23/2, see Daymond et al., 2003, pp. 209–211)

Andanette Kararaimbe places the women's opposition to the examinations firmly within a context of political opposition, of the nation. The invasion of an individual woman's body by a prying colonial doctor is clearly depicted as an assault on the women's cultural identity.

... I pray to you madam, please be good enough to consider what we are saying to you. ... see that a matter or a custom which never existed in our nation is a very difficult thing for us. God has created a man and a woman to come together and be together under one blanket, but even our husbands have never seen our private parts. ... We have been rushed at in this matter without notification. It came to us like a stroke until it made us shake. We were unable to think what to do at the moment. (SWAA 1149 A.158/23/2, see Daymond et al., 2003, pp. 209–211)

The literal making of the private public with the speculum as instrument, disorients the women – 'a stroke that made us shake' as it politicises them. Notions of the

intimate, the private, are disrupted by the colonial intervention and then contested as the public, the nation, evoking the uncanny 'unhoming' as discussed by Bhabha (1994). Women's bodies, all too frequently, are the site where the violence of conquest and vengeance can be enacted.

Ndeutala Hishongwa's *Marrying Apartheid*,³⁷ published in Australia in 1986, was the first novel by a black Namibian woman. It locates the struggle against apartheid directly within the body of the female protagonist – Tanga is both individuated and a metaphor for Namibia.³⁸ Hishongwa situates Tanga within the context of traditional patriarchy – a social context that has its own balance, a balance which is ambivalently presented by Hishongwa's obviously feminist consciousness. When Hango hears Tanga accept his marriage proposal:

The sweat was pouring from his face, though it was cool that day. He took a white handkerchief from his pocket and dried his face, leaving it shining *and Tanga could easily see herself in his face as if it was a mirror*. He trembled and said: 'Good, I am very happy ... I need you as my wife, to bear my children and to care for my property.' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 9)

This asymmetrical mirroring, where she is reflected in the face of her husband, in his desire, shattered the violence of apartheid. Hango becomes an apartheid collaborator. The beating Tanga suffers at her collaborator-husband's hands is a metaphor for the violence suffered by Namibia. It is, however, also because she is a woman that she suffers in this particular, private way. It is rare that domestic violence is presented as a political act. The structure of her community, premised on the subordination of the wife within strict social sanction, offers her no redress and little succour as its fabric is irrevocably altered by the trauma of occupation and war. The only alternative offered is the nationalist struggle. Namibia's national liberation struggle which resulted in independence in 1990, was as ambivalent and as complex as it was for women in other struggles.

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³⁷ See Chapter 16 in this volume for a more detailed discussion.

³⁸ This novel, as is evident in the framing around the book, is a classic in the protest genre. Hishongwa worked for the SWAPO committee in Australia. By creating a female protagonist, however, the experience of colonialism and struggle is read obliquely as it is domestic patriarchal power that mediates and exacerbates the violence of colonialism and military occupation.

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3

Conceptualising national transition: Namibian women's autobiographies about the liberation struggle

Kelly Jo Fulkerson-Dikuua

INTRODUCTION

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294)

The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was deployed in Namibia in April 1989 to oversee the peaceful elections in Namibia. UNTAG was formed in reaction to Resolution 385, passed by the United Nations in 1976 calling for free elections in Namibia and allowing for Namibia to become an autonomous political entity. This first free election in 1989 reflected the culmination of a twenty-four year liberation struggle, beginning on 26 August 1966 and finally achieving independence on 21 March 1990. Despite various apartheid laws enacted upon Namibia prior to independence in the late 1940s and early 1950s, migrant workers made their way into South Africa via Botswana and were exposed to South African resistance movements and political thought. The Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC), a predecessor to SWAPO, for example, was formed in Cape Town by a number of migrant contract workers in 1957 and, in 1959, it became the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO) which was formed by Sam Nujoma and Jacob Kuhangua with the goal to 'fight relentlessly to achieve United Nations Trusteeship and ultimate

independence for the people of South-West Africa' (Constitution, 1959, quoted in Dobell, 2000, p. 29). These fledgling movements provided a platform for the budding black Namibian intelligentsia to record historical, and autobiographical, accounts of their lives. As historian Marian Wallace (2011) indicates:

Writing the history of the period between the Second World War and independence in 1990 is facilitated by the fact that African-authored sources are much more plentiful than for earlier periods: the views and experiences of black people in Namibia are evidenced at this period through autobiography, scholarship, letters, oral history, works of devotion and political statements. (p. 243)

Wallace points to the emergence of black Namibian authored sources which document not only the legal and juridical changes in Namibia, but which also include autobiographical accounts, allowing for the narrative of the individual to be captured within these writings. While governance bodies, such as UNTAG, were necessary to effect policy-level changes, much of the transition actually happened at a grassroots level of the individual. Autobiography, as a literary genre, accounts for these individual experiences and represents transitions which slip through the cracks of legal documents, mandates and policies.

Autobiography itself, however, is a genre riddled with problematic questions regarding the authenticity of the author's portrayal of truth as well as the legitimacy of autobiographical works, to capture the story of women and minorities. Under a post-modern and post-colonial lens, for example, autobiography as a canonised genre has been criticised due to its agentic nature, language restrictions, historical implications and a colonial/patriarchal past. Critics have also argued that autobiography, a genre having arisen from the Western canon, is an impossibility in an African setting. These scholars, as documented by Roger Berger (2010), discredit African autobiography as being a genre which becomes a 'second-rate' attempt in European languages or a genre which is merely grafted onto an African context. Other scholars, such as James Olney (1973), would disagree with this assessment; Olney opens his seminal work on African autobiography, *Tell Me Africa: An Approach to African Literature*, by indicating that 'autobiographies from Africa are plentiful in their number ... [and] very varied in the forms they assume' (p. 26). Other scholars (Hitchcott, 1997; Alabi, 2005) argue that African autobiographies do indeed comprise a distinct genre of black writing and that the success of autobiography in an African context arises from its agency to preserve cultures and, notably, 'as a record of the struggles for survival by many African societies' (Alabi, 2005, p. 2).

Thus African autobiography, though ever-present in oral histories, multiplied during the 1960s and 1970s as a mechanism both to record a fleeting pre-colonial past and to capture the manifold emotions of the cultural, national and personal transitions from the colonial to the post-colonial situation. Within the genre of African autobiography, the unique niche of African female autobiographical writing has surfaced. Autobiography has historically been considered both a European and a

male-dominated genre. Scholars such as Phillip Holden (2013), for example, trace the genealogy of founding father autobiographies from the likes of Benjamin Franklin to Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela and Sam Nujoma.³⁹ These works, Holden (2013) explains, 'rigorously suppress personal affect in an attempt to create a progressive national narrative' (p. 116). He terms these narratives, 'national autobiographies', but he does not deny that women also contribute similar autobiographical works which 'seek to expand the manner in which history is conceived in national autobiography to include women's experiences' (Holden, 2013, p. 116). Feminist scholars, however, would disagree that it is only the female experience which is proffered within these 'national autobiographies' and rather that female autobiography itself comprises a distinct genre.

Within this genre of female autobiography, there are debates on which terminology one should apply to a self-referential genre. Libertina Amathila (2012), for example, writes the following in the Prologue of her book *Making a Difference*: 'In the early 1970s, I thought of telling a story about my life; not an autobiography as such but a story' (p. xvii). In this, Amathila explores the idea that her work is not necessarily an 'autobiography', but rather a life story, or, as Smith and Watson (2001) would say, a 'life narrative' (p. 26). Post-colonial theorist and feminist scholar, Gayatri Spivak (1988), echoes this sentiment, indicating that the term 'autobiography' is not suitable for female or colonial writings, but rather proposes that one should use the term 'testimony' to give witness to oppression with accuracy and holism (p. 7). Within autobiographical scholarship, however, one can see an alternate viewpoint in which women gain power and agency in telling their stories, or by giving 'testimony.' Gillian Whitlock (2000), for instance, asserts that 'autobiographic writing by those [who were] subjected to the most brutal forms of colonialization ... allows us to examine the connections between women's texts and the production of truth and authority in autobiography' (p. 3). In this, Whitlock writes of the manner in which the female personhood is negotiated and empowered through the 'production of truth' in autobiography. Though Whitlock's discussion of autobiography seems contradictory to those of Spivak, Watson and Smith, these contrasting theories actually work in tandem to produce a new genre of female autobiography, or life writings, which allows women the space to express their unique experiences. As Amathila explains, for example, her story is for Namibians and specifically for women who want to 'do something' (p. xvii). It tells her story and how she contributed 'to the history of independent Namibia' (p. xvii).

Amathila is not alone in using autobiography as a means of historical documentation. Female-authored writings about the liberation struggle have emerged in the form of memoirs, autobiographies, life writings and testimonials. In addition to Amathila's text we find other books like Lydia Shaketange's *Walking the Boeing 707* (2008) and Ellen Namhila's *The Price of Freedom* (1997). The transition of Namibia is reflected in the writing of the life stories of these women, as they, themselves, transition from childhood to adulthood and from inhabitants of South West Africa to transients in exile

³⁹ See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion on Sam Nujoma's autobiography.

and, finally, as returned citizens of a newly formed Namibia. While other Namibian women, such as Beatrice Sandelowsky (*Autobiographically Yours*, 2004), Jane Katjavivi (*Undisciplined Heart*, 2010) and Rachel Valentina (*The Exile Child: An Autobiography*, 2010) have produced similar works, this chapter is limited to Amathila's, Shaketange's and Namhila's texts as each of these women went into exile and returned to Namibia. These two formative transitions will thus be explored to understand not only the lives of these women, but the power of the narrative to 'confront us openly with the issue of the meaning and value of our ineluctable historical and social condition' (Zeraffa, M., quoted in Gikandi, 1988, p. x).

WRITING A CHILDHOOD

Benjamin (1973) argues that a text should be evaluated by its 'usefulness'. He indicates that 'the usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim' (p. 86). For Benjamin (1973), the purpose of a story, or a 'take away message' (p. 86) thus becomes an essential element in telling a story. Namhila, Shaketange and Amathila all indicate that their purpose in writing was to preserve history and to motivate the youth of Namibia to preserve their newly-constructed nation. Each of these women begins their autobiographies in their childhood years in Namibia. Namhila (1997), for instance, also a prolific biographer, recounts her dismay at the funeral of Tate Gotlieb Nathaniel Maxuilili: 'I cried, not so much because Maxuilili had died, but more so because I felt history had been lost. I stood there, feeling helpless as we buried [sic] an encyclopaedia of our history' (p. 25). This impetus to record history, is not lost among the other writers. Shaketange expresses a similar sentiment, 'I wrote this story not just to tell of my freedom path, but so that my children and their children and their children can know something of their grandmother who walked the BOEING 707 and made it to the other side of the world and BACK' (p. 127).

Smith and Watson (2010) explain that 'autobiographical narratives are often written in later life and construct a storyline which extends from childhood to the present moment of narration' (p. 150). This juxtaposition of childhood as narrated through adulthood can cause an interesting point of departure as an adult which often reflects upon his/her growth since childhood and can re-interpret particular childhood events. It is thus not surprising that these women begin their tales within their childhoods, and that they often reflect upon their childhood experiences, values and mores to teach the reader. One narrative technique Namhila, for example, employs to engage her audience in narration, is to pose questions or offer her opinion in a direct, matter-of-fact manner. Take, for instance, the following story in which she explains that she leaves home without permission to attend a cousin's wedding. Upon arrival, her uncle and aunt (her caretakers) are very angry and she is 'close to being spanked' (p. 22). She then writes, 'looking back at the harsh discipline under which I was brought up, I wonder if it would not have been possible for my family to achieve the desired behaviour through a different approach, less forceful'

(p. 22). In this direct address to the audience with her adult musings, the audience is drawn into the situation and asked to contemplate various social issues. They are also asked to merge past practices with present traditions and situations, making the narrator both the child in the anecdote as well as the adult who is speaking. The child's voice is, therefore, articulated through an adult lens and this presence demonstrates the ways in which each of these women feels that she is directly shaped and influenced by her childhood circumstances.

Namhila's narrative becomes a mechanism of story-telling as well as one of teaching and social instruction. Namhila blends the past with the present and reflects upon her refined, adult ideologies. While many authors use literature as an avenue to 'show' or demonstrate a concept rather than state it directly, all three of these women have chosen to use a similar, direct narrative style. The authors blur the lines between the past and the present and reflect directly upon the ways in which their childhood experiences have impacted their understanding of their present, adult identities. Shaketange (2008), for example, details the story of a time she was swimming across a river at the 'Old Farm' with her friend, Tuhafeni. She begins to drown and is attempting to get Tuhafeni or some nearby women who are washing clothes to help her. Despite thrashing around for some time, no one comes to her rescue. She eventually manages to make it on shore alive. She writes, 'since that day at the Old Farm, I have not gone near a river, a stream, let alone a swimming pool' (p. 64). This example from Shaketange demonstrates the manner in which these women are both past and present narrators within their works.

Critics have discussed these blurred chronological lines. Apollo Amoko (2009), for example, asserts that the structure of the autobiography and that of the Bildungsroman are aligned, as each genre tends to 'begin at the end' (p. 195). He supports his statement with the Lacanian idea that what can be realised in history is not the story of the distant – or even the immediate – past, but rather of what will happen in the future, or the 'future anterior ... [of what is] in the process of becoming' (ibid.). Both autobiography and Bildungsroman, thus, according to Amoko, are linear chronologies which trace throughout the past to bring us to the present formation of the narrator. He explains that 'by telling the stories of individual passages from childhood into adulthood, the authors critique the past and present and offer alternative futures' (p. 197). As Smith and Watson (2010) explain, the Bildungsroman generally 'may involve escape from ... family, schooling and a journey into the wide world of urban life where encounters ... lead the protagonist to re-evaluate assumptions' (p. 263). In African literature, this type of transformation is generally linked to colonial history with autobiographies and Bildungsroman reflecting the protagonists' encounter with social changes. 'Like its European forebear, the emergence of the African Bildungsroman coincided with a period of radical transformation and social upheaval when, in the wake of colonialism, the traditional ways of being were undermined, if not forever transformed' (Amoko, 2009, p. 200).

Thus, within these coming of age texts that 'begin at the end', these women are able to reflect, as adults, upon those familial and cultural practices with which they

agree or disagree. Each of the women, for example, contemplates the merits of the traditional idea that children are to be 'seen' and not heard. Amathila (2012) aptly names her opening 'Childhood Innocence' and notes the ways in which she, as a young girl, was naïve to many aspects of life. In this opening, she documents the manner in which African children have traditionally been expected to be silent in the presence of elders and not to raise too many questions, particularly when concerning adults. She begins her autobiography with an anecdote, detailing a time in which she was told that she was not to question the fact that her teacher relieves himself in the bush, just like any other village member. She writes that her grandmother was not amused. 'In the first place, I had no business to follow grown-ups ... that was the life of a real village girl. Later, as I grew up, I discovered that I was not alone in that trend of thought; my age mates also wondered about many things. We grew up in an era when "children were to be seen, not heard"' (p. 2).

By referring to herself as a 'real village girl', Amathila is capturing a snapshot of the traditional Namibian values in her own life and village. This identity is wrapped up within the idea that children are not to interfere with the lives of grown-ups nor to question the actions or decisions of authority. Her ability to reflect upon this traditional practice, indicates that this autobiography has provided an avenue for her, as a product of that culture, to reconsider and renegotiate her understanding of her own culture and up-bringing. Namhila links this lack of questioning of adults to the ways in which the schools were run. She writes of her experience in school:

The colonial education most of us received was not aimed at motivating African students to develop curiosity which would lead to independent thinking. In my case, I was taught to memorise things and to answer questions as I had been taught to, and not as I understood them. A student could be failed for answering questions from her own understanding ... [I]n Namibia, I was not taught to be an independent thinker, but a repeater of my teachers. (Namhila, 1997, p. 25)

Namhila (1997) continues her indictment of the educational system by indicating that the 'deliberate educational strategy for the so-called "natives" demotivated students from developing independent thinking' (p. 25).

The women use their childhoods, and their autobiographies as a whole, to discuss not only their own lives, but the social problems and conditions in which Namibia has found itself. Namhila, for example, cites her own educational experience as the reason why so many Namibians are not returning to the village to assist their own communities. She details the divide between the 'educated' and the 'uneducated' and the manner in which educated people who live in towns send meagre remittances home, but do not return to work in the villages. She notes that 'things could be different if educated people (myself included) returned to their villages and helped those who do not have education to gain some improvement in their lives' (p. 25). She further writes that such a return to the village would provide a positive example of an educated person within the community to encourage parents and guardians to

ensure a basic education for their children. Namhila even goes so far as to say that the educated people she knows, would only 'go for the white collar jobs provided by their masters, the colonisers' (p. 26). She notes that this trend has continued in present-day Namibia and remains a problem with most of the current university students settling in urban areas, or abroad, rather than returning to their home communities.

Namhila further cites the issue of girls' education as being a problem which she experienced as a young girl and one which has remained a problem to this day. She explains that as a young girl, education was not a priority in her life because girls were needed to do housework and tend to the fields, noting that she was often late for school and that after school she 'had to rush back home to help with household chores. I got a thrashing whenever I came home late from school ... I was the only girl at home. I was expected to perform miracles' (p. 23). Moreover, she did not have time to study or complete her homework because of her chores and that, without electricity or lamps, she could not do her home-work at night. She concludes her discussion by writing that 'many girls in most rural areas of Namibia continue to suffer the same hardship' (p. 23). Shaketange (2008) makes similar observations about her childhood as a young girl in the village as she writes that like any African child, 'I had different roles to play in the house. Being a girl, I had to pound millet to produce flour, which makes *oshifima* ... It was also the duty of a girl to collect firewood, fetch water and help with the preparation of food. Boys did not have much to do when compared to the workload of girls.' (p. 11).

In this narration, it is evident that Shaketange has noted the ways in which girls are traditionally given a higher workload in the house.

The ability of these women to reflect upon the patriarchal traditions of their up-bringing is indicative of their own time spent outside their cultural setting in which they were exposed to other social structures. Each of these women, for instance, was in exile and lived in various other African and European settings. Both Sow (2010) and Amoko (2009) discuss this disconnect which many Africans experience from their traditional up-bringing and subsequent exposure to Western or colonial culture. Sow, for instance, explains that the African child's autobiography is thus marked with these 'public affairs and politics' in three forms, namely 'accommodation, constant adjustment and mobility' (Sow, 2010, p. 503). The disruption of the child's up-bringing, such as through school, church, or in this case, exile, and her constant adjustment to the colonial institutions, lead to an epiphanic mobility in which the narrator graduates from childhood and, thus 'comes of age'. For Sow, therefore, these colonial institutions become not only a part of the child's life, but of her identity and lead her into adulthood. As an example, he cites Fanon's 'dialectic of the colonised' in relation to the main character of Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*'s adaptation to school as he tries to 'combine multiple tendencies within his formation, without renouncing dramatically his own heritage' (Sow, 2010, p. 508).

Sow's interpretation of mobility is not simply a physical mobility to and from school, but a social mobility into school and into new career possibilities that would

separate these children from both their peers and, significantly, their parents. He argues that this separation brings about an intense ‘individualism’ in which the child narrator is both a ‘catalyst for change’ and ‘the only one to understand’ his/her newfound status (p. 509). The autobiographical narrator thus faces a singular mobility into an uncharted territory and into an uncertain future. Sow notes that ‘at the end of both works, the child remains alone’ (p. 513). These children thus find themselves forging forward with a new identity created by their encounters with colonial structures and their adaptation into new patterns of existence. Similarly, Amoko (2009) notes that, ‘in short, African autobiographies and Bildungsroman seem to portray an important milestone, namely, “the decisive transfer of authority from fathers to their sons and daughters”’ (p. 207). He links this transfer to the same sense of ‘modernity’ which emerges in Sow’s argument that children rise in social status above their family and are thus left with an individuated sense of education and isolation from both their families and tradition. Smith and Watson (2010) support these discussions as they write, ‘the bildungsroman [sic] can also be used negatively as a norm of assimilation into the dominant culture ... that produces alienation from the home community’ (p. 263). These ‘coming of age’ stories thus reflect a transition from the traditional authority of the African patriarch and into a new society in which children are afforded the opportunity for new modes of thought which differentiate them from their ancestral pasts, sometimes facing isolation. Thus, these women not only move from children to adults, but also embody the transition from traditional Namibian values and authoritarian structures to a generation which has blended their knowledge of tradition with that of the broader world which they have encountered in exile.

TO EXILE AND BACK

Approximately 43,000 Namibians went into exile, of which about 20,000 were children who were born in exile in various SWAPO camps. Ellen Namhila (1997), for example, closes the prologue of her autobiography, *The Price of Freedom*, by asking ‘This is how my 19 years in exile started. How did my childhood experiences prepare me to get there?’ (p. 12). Both exile and childhood play a prominent role in the work of all three women. Each of their autobiographies documents their time in exile, as well as their respective returns and the various challenges and opportunities which they faced due to their time in exile. Smith and Watson (2010) explain the following about exile writings:

Narratives of exile inscribe a nomadic subject set in motion for a variety of reasons and now inhabiting cultural borderlands, who may or may not return ‘home’, but who necessarily negotiates cultural spaces of the in-between where ‘hybrid and unstable identities’ are rendered palpable through negotiation ‘between conflicting traditions – linguistic, social, ideological. (p. 269)

Smith and Watson thus refer to the loss of identity which exiled individuals feel as they are disconnected from their familiar cultural and physical spaces. In the introduction to her anthology Lindiwe Mabuza (1989) echoes this discussion as she presents her perception of exile. She states that 'you are lonely when your exile has no purpose because you feel completely alienated. Whereas if you are purposely engaged in eliminating what sent you away from home, you can see a way out of the madness' (Mabuza, 1989, p. vii). Mabuza compiled this collection of semi-autobiographical work of South African women in order to address this disenfranchisement that exiled individuals feel when they are unable to address the very political/social situation which drove them away from home. Further, Smith and Watson (2010) cite work done by scholars of the American North West who have reported that 'one marker of autobiography produced in and about the North American West is a preoccupation with place, along with a focus on identity issues directly related to place: rootedness, anxiety, nostalgia, restlessness' (p. 43).

While these women do express a sense of nostalgia for Namibia, they express a stronger sense of commitment to their home communities and an identity rooted in their exile communities. When going into exile as teenagers or young adults, most of the women cite the help of an adult who helped them to cross the border or who took care of them on their journeys abroad. Amathila, for instance, writes of Comrade Nanyemba who was 'walking through the night and sleeping in the bush to see me off and he didn't even know me before. He wasn't my family, but we became close because of the struggle and he was risking his life [for me]' (Amathila, 2012, p. 25). She explains that 'this is the nature of the sacrifices we made as liberation fighters. We fought not for ourselves but for the Namibian nation to be free' (p. 25). Shaketange, similarly, discusses both her teacher Barkias Haimbodi who encouraged the school learners to go into exile, as well as her Uncle Heelu who went into exile with her and who took care of her along the path by exchanging his clothes for food and water to feed both Shaketange and her friend Tuhafeni. Namhila (1997) also explains that within the exile camps, 'all children were the responsibility of all parents ... children referred to all mothers as *oomeme* and all fathers as *ootate*' (p. 95).

These women's desires to preserve their autobiographical tales for the communities thus springs from a deep-rooted sense of communality which is present in all their works of exile. James Olney (1973) explains that this phenomenon is not uncommon in African autobiography; he writes that his book, *Tell Me Africa*, 'considers autobiography from Africa less as an individual phenomenon than a social one' (p. viii). In their introduction Coullie, Meyer, Ngwenya and Oliver (2006) cite African humanism, or the Ubuntu idea that 'a person is a person through other persons' (p. 5). Breyten Breytenbach (quoted in Coullie et al., 2006) supports this idea, stating that the 'sense of I ... is dependent on the interaction with something or somebody "out there". Community is usually the mirror' (p. 5). Smith and Watson (2010) elaborate, explaining that post-coloniality explores the ways in which a colonial subject has established an identity. They write that 'these subject positions – for they are always multiple and often contradictory – are effects of social relations'

(Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 215). These social relations are particularly dynamic for the colonial subject as, in colonial or exile situations, there are 'fluid boundaries of relationality rather than ... clear cut ego differentiation' (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 216). Olney (1973) discusses this relationality as he writes that there is an 'underlying unity in the way the [African] writers view their own experience and the African experience, in the way they conceive of human existence and human society' (p. 26).

Thus, despite the exiled state of these women, their sense of commitment to the struggle as well as their sense of identity is deeply rooted in their exile community and has curbed the sense of loneliness and nostalgia often common in exile texts. Amathila, for instance, notes the following of her return to Namibia, 'I can't describe what I felt [when landing by plane in Namibia]. Maybe due to the fact that I was always travelling to different countries I was not overly excited; it felt like the usual journey to another country' (p. 115). She explains that she only had 'tears come to [her] eyes' when she realised that her aunt had come to greet her; she writes 'only then did I feel welcome; I felt that, after all, I had a family to welcome me' (p. 115). Her feeling of connection to Namibia only returned after finding her community and being reunited with her family. Namhila (1997) explains that, despite her joy at learning of the possibility of the 1989 elections, she had to sit down and weigh the pros and cons of repatriation. 'I had been away from Namibia for 15 years. I could not pretend that going back would be easy ... but the word "independence" had a magic ring to it. ... Above all, that feeling of belonging of which I had been deprived all these years, would at last be mine. I would be able to see my family again' (pp. 148–9).

While these women have internalised a new identity in exile, whether through their experiences in Europe or other African countries, their connection to Namibia lies deeply in their commitment to the liberation struggle and, more so, in the connection to their families and the Namibian people. Despite close family relations, the return home was not always easy. Many returned exiles faced disillusionment and dire circumstances in a country that had grown and changed over the twenty to thirty years during which they were in exile. Shaketange (2008), for instance, writes the following:

While I left at age 14 and returned at age 29, I had to face the fact that Namibia did not come to a standstill in 1974 when I left, awaiting my return in 1989. Things moved on without me. While I saw how other societies live in Sierra Leone, Zambia, Finland and Britain, people from my community in Namibia continued living their lives in much the same ways: planting omahangu, harvesting, pounding. People grew up and grew old without me. Some returnees ... lost inheritances, seniority on their jobs ... land and leases ... even worse; there were those whose family members did indeed reject them on return. (p. 124)

Here Shaketange documents that, although returning to an independent Namibia held obvious advantages over an apartheid South West Africa, a return to a land

without social relations led to feelings of isolation even after leaving exile. Thus, the work of these women reveals the complexity of transitions which individuals felt in the liberation struggle of Namibia. While exiled children grew up internalising foreign traditions and exiled adults returned to complex social and familial situations, a new Namibia was born in which, while the laws changed, social relations also took a forefront in the transitional process. These autobiographies thus capture the means by which the liberation struggle affected changes of much more than a legal status, but also of a nation of individuals with complex familial and social relationships.

CONCLUSION

All these texts are national allegories ... the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled third-world public culture and society. (Jameson, 1986, p. 67)

These three autobiographical works of Amathila, Namhila and Shaketange have become historical artefacts which document the duality of national transition as change is effected on the level of the individual and spreads to affect national structures. The transitions of these women from children to adults as well as from exiled women to returnees, reflect the story of Namibia. These three works then prove that African autobiography is, in fact, a possibility and is a genre which thrives both to document history and to connect this history to the stories of the individuals who comprise this history. In finding a precise designation for these works, and to answer the question raised in my introduction about the correct terminology for female, African autobiographies, we can turn to the work of two scholars, Nicki Hitchcott (1997) and Caren Kaplan (1998). Hitchcott, for instance, offers a solution to the conundrum faced by the African writer who must engage in Philippe Lejeune's (1989) autobiographical pact, which privileges the individual as the author, narrator and protagonist of his/her text. Hitchcott (1997) argues that the African autobiographer is 'in danger of distorting the narrative as Lejeune's pact emphasises the importance of the individual ... a concept which is incompatible with the collective tradition of African art and literature' (p. 16). She thus offers the word 'confession' for a 'less individualistic definition' (p. 16). She indicates that the confessional mode works for both African autobiographies, as well as for female autobiography as it veers away from the linear male narrative, contested by feminist literary critics. She further argues, that a confessional mode allows for a reconciliation of the 'individual/collective' dialectic which is 'itself a reformation of the axis of modernism/tradition' (p. 16). Thus, Hitchcott supplies a term which accounts for the communal nature and focus of these women's autobiographical writings.

Along similar lines, Kaplan (1998) proposes the term 'cultural autobiography', to refer to the intimate relationship between an individual and his/her community and history. She writes, 'personal histories that link the individual with particular communities at given historical junctures can be read as cultural autobiographies' (p. 213). She expands on this idea: 'the nature of the relationship between author

and critic in the instance of testimonial writing is never simple or non-political and must always be charted' (p. 210). Coinciding with Frederic Jameson's (1986) idea that all texts from the third world are national allegories, Kaplan's argument supports the idea that African autobiographies are, in fact, culturally based and exist in an interactive manner with the people from the societies of the writers. These particular Namibian autobiographies, for example, are cultural autobiographies as they are meant to detail the personal history of individuals taking part in a larger communal and national movement. This archive of confessional cultural autobiographies, provides fertile ground for understanding and re-interpreting Namibia's transition into an independent nation. As Derrida (1998) explains, that while an archive is a means of both preserving and forgetting the past, it also contains a 'messianic' quality, or the possibility of re-interpretation in the future, which ensures a certain amount of ethical and political responsibility within the existence of the archive itself. These autobiographies therefore guarantee a social responsibility to the stories of these women as well as to the historic struggle for independent Namibia.

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4

Emplotting nationalism: Comparing Sam Nujoma's *Where Others Wavered* and Joseph Diescho's *Born of the Sun*

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INTRODUCTION

Born of the Sun (Diescho, 1988) and *Where Others Wavered* (Nujoma, 2001) are historically important narratives bearing on Namibian nationalism. They are among the 'new sagas ... constructed to replace the distortions of the ... past colonial masters' (Melber, 2003, p. 6). As such, they are apt subjects for the analysis of the interaction between nationalism and narrative (a prominent topic in recent years; see, for example, Bhabha's [1990] influential collection). The following analysis begins with a broad, theoretical consideration of the nature of nationalism and the central operation of emplotment for a nationalist movement. From there it turns to Nujoma, examining his autobiography as a fairly standard instance of nationalist narrative. The essay then takes up Diescho's novel (with Wallin),⁴⁰ which involves a relatively non-standard sort of emplotment. The conclusion briefly considers the degree to which nationalist ideas guide emplotment versus the degree to which emplotment guides nationalist ideas.

⁴⁰ The cover of *Born of the Sun* lists Diescho as the author, but the title page lists Diescho 'with Celeste Wallin.' Evidently, they were not full co-authors, but Wallin was not simply an editor either. For ease of reference, in this chapter citations will be (Diescho, 1988).

EMPLOTTING NATIONALISM

Humans readily class themselves – or allow themselves to be classed – into groups defining supposed identities. In social psychology, identity groups to which one belongs are called ‘in-groups’; groups to which one does not belong are ‘out-groups’. Such group identifications are not necessarily a matter of deep affinity or interconnectedness. They are, fundamentally, a simple matter of labelling. Such labelling has strong cognitive and emotional consequences, defining preferences for in-group members and prejudices against out-group members (see Duckitt, 1992; and Hirschfeld, 1996). A central argument of my book *Understanding Nationalism* (Hogan, 2009) is that nationalism is a form of such identity group definition. Specifically, it is a form of identity group definition connected with some principles of social governance (an actual or aspirational government) and some territory.

Making a particular identity category salient, functional, and otherwise likely to be adopted is no small task by itself. To take an example from Diescho’s novel, in 1968, Kake villagers were unlikely to spontaneously define themselves as ‘Namibian’. Fostering the adoption of that identity category required work. Moreover, even after it is established, such identification is insufficient to begin a nationalist movement or to foster individual contributions to a movement that has already begun. Limited to a form of bare identification, nationalism is likely to remain amorphous and under-motivated. Put simply, movements require organisation, orientation, and something like incitement. Beyond self-categorisation (e.g. as Namibian), a movement requires that individuals have a particular understanding of the current situation and the possibilities for acting in that situation; it also requires emotional engagement, the impulse to undertake some form of action.

Understanding Nationalism treats two prominent means of providing understanding of national conditions, both how they developed and what can be done about them. Those means are modelling and emplotment. These two are also the primary means of fostering emotional response. Modelling is the use of one familiar (usually concrete) domain to consider an unfamiliar (often abstract) domain. In the case of nationalism, such models would include, for example, the concept of a nation as a family. Emplotment is the organisation of some domain into a story. At its most minimal, a story is simply a causal account of particulars, as opposed to a causal generalisation. For example, ‘I bumped into the table and the vase fell off, shattering when it hit the floor’ is a (minimal) story. It is different from the various laws of physics (such as the law of gravitation) that are presupposed, in some general way, by this story. A more robust notion of a story would include agents pursuing goals of some human significance and encountering obstacles to those goals. For example, the mini-story about the vase might be part of a larger tale of romantic love and the narrator’s attempt to woo his beloved with an unlucky vase of flowers. As the mention of romantic love suggests, such stories tend to cluster around a few emotions and associated goals. This clustering defines genre patterns.

A few genres tend to occur cross-culturally and to be predominant in individual traditions (see Hogan 2009, and 2011). For example, romantic tragi-comedy is the story of protagonists pursuing union with their beloved. The animating emotion for this genre is, of course, romantic love. Other prominent, cross-cultural genres include the heroic and family separation narratives. The heroic narrative focuses on pride and anger; familial separation on attachment or bonding. Each of these genres has prototypical features. For example, the heroic narrative commonly involves a society with a 'correct' form of political governance (e.g. a divinely ordained monarchy). This is threatened internally by usurpation (e.g. by a rival to the throne) and externally by a social enemy. The prototypical form of the heroic plot commonly involves an invasion of the home society by the external enemy and a usurpation of governance by an internal traitor. This frequently leads to the exile or imprisonment of the rightful leader. Heroic conflict ensues, usually in the form of combat, sometimes with the aid of a 'good collaborator' from the enemy side. In comic versions, the home side wins and restores social wellbeing, often in an idealised form.

As should be clear, the heroic narrative is itself already linked with nationalism. It begins with an in-group/out-group division, separating the national 'us' from the national enemy, 'them'. It proceeds to celebrate loyalty to the nation through its vilification of the treacherous usurper. It motivates anger against the enemy for invading and laying waste the homeland. In a proper context – for example, in the context of a war or national liberation struggle – it may even foster or intensify emotion outside the narrative, in the real world, contributing perhaps to action. In keeping with this, heroic tragi-comedy is the fundamental form of nationalist emplotment (see Hogan, 2009 for fuller discussion of this and the following points). Put differently, emplotments of national history and national self-understanding take the heroic genre as a default. Other things being equal, nations think of themselves heroically. However, in special circumstances, other genres may emplot specific sequences of events or fictions relating to those events. For example, when a nation is internally divided, nationalist writers sometimes take up the romantic genre, depicting lovers separated by the two sides (for some cases, see Sommer, 1990).

As the reference to fiction suggests, nationalist emplotment applies to both fiction and non-fiction, though it is more obvious in the case of the latter. Specifically, the difference between emplotment and free narrative invention is that emplotment is normatively constrained by facts at some level. Free narrative invention, in contrast, has no such normative constraint. It may seem that emplotment, then, applies only to history and related modes, such as biography – in short, to types of writing that make direct or indirect reference to facts. Almost all forms of writing do, however, actually make such reference. More technically, we may say that any work with thematic concerns – political, ethical, prudential, or whatever – is normatively constrained by some facts. To have a thematic concern is to aim at having consequences for the real world. That consequentiality is bound up with claims about the real world. For example, if a work presents itself as encouraging support for the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), then it almost

certainly has some degree of normative constraint by historical facts. Such a work does something objectionable if it misrepresents the policies or practices of SWAPO or the situation of South West Africa (Namibia) at the time in question or historically. In this way, both fiction and non-fiction may involve the emplotment of historical events and conditions.

Of course, the degree or extent of constraint is different in the two cases. In an autobiography, such as *Where Others Wavered*, we require greater rigour of constraint. This may seem to weigh in the other direction, suggesting that only fiction may be emplotted, with non-fiction simply governed by the facts. However, as many writers have pointed out, we do not simply report all the facts when doing history. We select and construe facts and we put them into causal relations with one another. In short, we necessarily turn them into stories in at least a minimal sense. The seminal discussion of emplotment in historiography is White (1973). This may seem to imply that non-fictional emplotments are invariably misleading or even out-and-out false, but that is overly rigorous. Non-fictional works are necessarily partial in their accounts of historical events. They may, however, be accurate within the bounds of their coverage and claims.

It goes beyond the scope of the present chapter to discuss the precise ways in which non-fictional emplotment may be problematic. However, there are two points that bear directly on the present analyses. First, the selective nature of an account always leaves open the possibility that even a non-misleading emplotment of historical events may be complemented by one or more very different, even to some extent contradictory emplotments. Second, the emplotment of non-fiction is likely to be 'looser' than the emplotment of fiction. In other words, the emplotment of non-fiction typically requires the inclusion of a wide range of events and conditions that may or may not have bearing on the precise genre at issue. In a work such as *Where Others Wavered*, the heroic genre is highly consequential for what it helps to select and construe. Local particulars are not wholly guided by the global genre structure.

Of course, putative non-fiction is not necessarily accurate even locally. Saunders (2003, p. 93) criticises Nujoma's book for inaccuracies, ranging from 'names of individuals and dates' to larger 'gaps and distortions'. Indeed, he concludes that 'Nujoma's book is more a work of propaganda than history' (p. 98). This suggests that, in practice, works presenting themselves as non-fiction are perhaps only constrained by the beliefs commonly held by the majority of their readers, prominently those regarding the most indisputable events and situations. This puts non-fiction in much the same position as historical and thematic fiction.

Before going on to treat the works by Nujoma and Diescho, it is important to elaborate a little further the nature of the genres that figure significantly in nationalist emplotment. First, we have already remarked on the association of particular genres with particular emotions. These are, first of all, the emotions that drive the action of the prototypical stories, for example, love in the romantic narrative. Genres also have what we might call 'emotional profiles' bearing on the responses of readers. Commonly, these are bound up with the story – internal emotions through empathy.

For example, when we empathise with lovers, we eagerly anticipate their union; we share their longing.

When genres have thematic consequences, thus implications for the reader's relation to the real world, the emotional profile may become a 'motivational profile'. We do not ordinarily have 'egoistic' emotions with respect to literary works. When I watch *Romeo and Juliet*, I am not in love with Juliet, nor am I in love with Romeo. Rather, I empathise with Romeo's love for Juliet and Juliet's love for Romeo and I therefore hope for their triumph over belligerent kin and their eventual union. However, the entire point of a politically engaged and politically themed work is to produce egoistic emotions. By 'egoistic' here, I do not mean 'egocentric' or 'selfish'. Rather, I mean emotions that bear on oneself, rather than on the fictional character with whom one empathises. Real-world motivations are always egoistic in this sense because they concern what I want to do, not what I hope will occur to a fictional character. By a 'motivational profile', then, I mean the emotional orientation a work fosters, not towards the fictional world, but towards the real world.

In the case of nationalist works, the motivational profile concerns the reader's attitude toward the nation and behaviour with respect to national causes. The function of the heroic plot is clear in this case. When effective, it operates to guide the reader toward a national self-identification. It helps to isolate some national enemy as an aggressor in military conflict and to provoke a sense of justified anger against that enemy. Such an emplotment, stressing the perfidy of the enemy, may pass over or rationalise aggression by the home society. It commonly characterises those who work with the enemy as traitors, cultivating disgust in their regard. In direct contrast with the traitors, it fosters a sense of loyalty in the non-collaborationist citizenry, and a sense of admiration for defectors from the enemy side. Finally, it is likely to suggest a sort of idealised vision of the eventual triumph of the 'right' leadership. It should be clear how the motivational profiles of successful heroic emplotments are 'functional' for nationalism. They foster ideas, attitudes, and in some cases even actions that might contribute to the advancement of nationalist causes. This is the form of emplotment that dominates Nujoma's memoir.

Things are far less clear with the family separation and reunion genre, the key story structure for *Born of the Sun*. In this genre, parents and children are separated, often for many years, then perhaps re-joined after a complex search. The results are often less than ideal, even in the putatively 'comic' version. As discussed in *Affective Narratology* (Hogan, 2011, pp. 199–209), there are different varieties of this genre, depending on the precise nature and responsibility for the separation of the parents and children. For our purposes, the key division is between cases where the abandoning parent is malevolent or neglectful and cases where he or she is self-sacrificing. In other words, in one sub-genre, the parent is engaging in bad parenting by abandoning the child. In the contrasting case, the parent has appropriate attachment or bonding with the child. However, leaving the child is necessitated by the best interests of the child, as when a poor mother arranges for a wealthy couple to adopt her beloved offspring.

Clearly, the precise emotional profile of a family separation narrative will depend on which version of the genre is taken up by the work. On the other hand, in both versions, there is likely to be some sort of empathy with the attachment longings and, in effect, grief of either the abandoned child (especially in the first version) or the self-sacrificing parent. The motivational profile is likely to take up these attachment feelings, extending them to the reader's own attachment objects (especially children or parents). The specifically nationalist motivational profile of these narratives will, of course, depend on the precise way in which nationalist concerns enter into the story. Diescho takes up the self-sacrificing sub-genre. In connection with this, he develops a story that places the blame for the familial separation on the colonial domination of Namibia by South Africa. The colonial system leads the hero of the novel to leave home for work in South Africa, then ultimately to join SWAPO and go into exile. He engages in his first self-sacrifice (leaving for the mine) in order to benefit his family directly. In addition, he joins SWAPO (thus making his second self-sacrifice) to benefit his family indirectly, by transforming the entire society. In response, readers are likely to feel antipathy toward the national enemy. However, this seems more likely to be a sort of sorrowful anger, not (I believe) the militant anger of the heroic structure. In connection with this, as we will see, the main orientation of *Born of the Sun* is toward cultivating reader compassion, rather than reader activism.

Motivational profiles are not simply a matter of emotions, but of goals also. In the case of the heroic narrative, the obvious goals that are likely to be carried over would include the defeat of the national enemy and the establishment of the right social order, guided by pride and loyalty. In contrast, the obvious goals that are likely to be carried over from familial narratives would include the improvement of society for the benefit of the next generation, a goal bound up with attachment feelings. Put somewhat crudely, the heroic would tend to promote motivations that are aggressive or violent, if perhaps as a matter of social self-defence, while the familial would tend to promote motivations that are nurturing and care-based.

This leads to a final point about genres. They are often 'gendered'. Heroic stories appear manly and are likely to stress masculinity. Masculinisation is a recurring characteristic of nationalism, with the celebration of putatively or stereotypically male force. In contrast, familial and nurturing concerns are commonly imagined to be feminine. They are not commonly the organising and orienting feelings of nationalist activism. Moreover, such gender orientation in emplotment is not simply incidental. It tends to extend to various incidentals of the work, ways in which the particulars of the narrative are developed outside what is strictly governed by the genre structure. For example, it does not seem to be mere coincidence that homo-social attachment with sexual overtones and full gay sexuality appear significantly in *Born of the Sun*. This partial 'queering' of nationalism in Diescho would seem to be related to the gender associations of the attachment- and nurturance-based emplotment of his novel.

WHERE OTHERS WAVERED

Where Others Wavered is a somewhat loosely emplotted work – necessarily so, as Nujoma must include a wide range of events, situations, and personalities in his autobiography. Moreover, the book does not have a pressing and immediate nationalist purpose. *Born of the Sun* was published before Namibian independence and was clearly aimed at fostering concerted support for that independence in the crucial final period before it occurred. In contrast, Nujoma's autobiography is largely a retrospective summation, a reflection on the nationalist developments that have already occurred. Moreover, the emplotment of the work is necessarily affected by the conventions of autobiography. These are not necessarily incompatible with the emplotments of nationalist literatures. However, they are different.

Nonetheless, Nujoma's memoir is devoted almost entirely to his nationalist activities, their precedents and consequences. As such, it involves a clear emplotment of nationalist events, related to the nationalist activism in which he engaged for most of his life. The nationalist story sequence presented by Nujoma closely follows the heroic genre. It may be summarised as follows: Invasion by the enemy led to military conflict, defeat, and conquest. The conquest largely disempowered the traditional rulers. With a few exceptions, the legitimate government was replaced by illegitimate collaborators (thus usurpers). SWAPO eventually inherited the role of legitimate leadership of the society, primarily for democratic reasons, but also because of the royal lineage of some leaders (including Nujoma) and the royal patronage of the group. The legitimate rulers were often imprisoned or exiled. However, largely through military struggle, in part aided by work with good collaborators from the other side, the rightful leadership vanquished the conquerors through combat and re-established right rule in the nation. This is followed by reflections on the admirable developments of independent Namibia, a muted form of the utopian idealisation of the restored nation in prototypical heroic narratives.

As readers familiar with the history of Namibia are aware, that history lends itself to heroic emplotment. On the other hand, it is not simply congruent with that emplotment. In addition to selecting material from a necessarily more complex and diverse history, heroic emplotment construes rightful leadership and false (collaborationist) leadership in particular ways that are not simply given in the facts of the case. It also in effect naturalises the very idea of 'Namibian' as a social identity – a perfectly reasonable undertaking for a nationalist memoir, but a restructuring and reinterpretation of the facts as well, since Namibia itself is a creation of colonialism rather than a naturally occurring social category. (Needless to say, no nation is a natural unit. The point is not that Namibia is different in this respect, but that it is the same. Nationalist narratives tend to occlude the artificiality of the nation in every case.)

More precisely, in keeping with its function as an autobiography, the book begins with Nujoma's birth. However, the nationalist operation of the narrative comes to the fore almost immediately as Nujoma (2001) does not name a local place for his

birth, but rather names 'an area ... then known by the world as colonial South West Africa, now the independent Republic of Namibia' (p. 1). In the second sentence, he refers to his life as a 'history', thereby linking it with the story of the nation, and goes on to speak of how he 'listened with pride to the stories of my parents' and grandparents' lives' (p. 1). This is consistent with the valuing of tradition in anti-colonial nationalism, but it also prepares the reader for subsequent revelations about his royal lineage. Moreover, what he learns as a youth brings him 'strength' and the ability to fight against 'the lion, leopard and jackal' (p. 1). This manly and potentially heroic skill is subsequently brought to bear on 'the colonial governments' which he directly compares with such 'predators'. He was able to engage in 'political and military struggle' against these human predators. The one-page introduction ends by stating the nationalist purpose of this memoir – 'to recount how the path of my life has joined with others on the road to independence for Namibia' (p. 1). In short, the goal is to emplot the Namibian nation.

The first chapter is entitled 'Background and Early Years', clearly leading to biographical expectations. However, it begins by referring to 'The story of what is known today as Namibia' (p. 3). This opening is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it implicitly indicates that the primary or most important identity category – the one that is foundational for his autobiography – is that of 'Namibian'. In connection with this, it tacitly suggests that Namibia has an historical continuity extending from centuries in the past. The brief early history/biography of Namibia concludes with the statement that 'The region' was 'ruled by powerful chiefs' (p. 5), establishing its legitimate governance.

The following section takes up a sort of Aristotelian reversal, when the 'history of the African people was so drastically diverted from its traditional path' (p. 5). This reversal, the key shift in the emplotment of Namibian history, was the European incursion – the invasion part of the heroic plot. Nujoma emphasises the military nature of the development, pointing to 'the tragic battle of Otjunda' and 'the eventual obliteration of 80% of the Khaua population' (p. 6). Also in keeping with the heroic prototype, he points to the loss of the traditional leadership – 'Then the Herero Chiefs ... protest[ed], they were arrested ... and shot as rebels' (p. 6). One peculiarity of historical emplotment is that it is almost necessarily more complex and multiple than fictional emplotment, which can afford to be more streamlined. In keeping with this, Nujoma goes on to stress the continuous nature of military struggle: 'when the indigenous people resisted colonisation, troops armed with modern weapons would then fight and conquer' (p. 7). This yields a recurring invasion/defeat sequence – not a single event, but a cyclical narrative.

Many of the heroes of in-group resistance are chiefs or kings. This was undoubtedly true in a sense. However, we will see a very different sort of emphasis in *Born of the Sun*, a stress on ordinary people, who were obviously crucial to resistance at every stage. In any case, Nujoma also notes that many official leaders were collaborators – in keeping no doubt with the facts of the case, but also with the heroic prototype. Such traitors contrast most strikingly with the 'good collaborator,' the defector from

the enemy – in this case, for example, Michael Scott, a White man who worked with the national in-group against his own identity group. In this case ‘puppet chiefs ... voted ... to incorporate South West Africa’ into ‘the Union of South Africa.’ This colonialist scheme did not succeed due only to the actions of two other chiefs and Scott (p. 17).

At this point, we finally turn to the putative subject of the book, Nujoma himself. With the heroic background just given, we learn that Nujoma’s grandfather was ‘a brave warrior’ who ‘killed a Portuguese soldier and captured a carbine gun.’ Moreover, ‘My parents ... were both from royal families’ (p. 19). Thus Nujoma presents himself as a rightful leader of the Namibian people for two reasons. First, he is a descendent of a nationalist military hero. Second, he is from a royal family. In both respects, he is a suitable choice for restoring rightful government to Namibia.

After some points about his parents, Nujoma returns to his birth. He briefly mentions his siblings, who make little appearance in the rest of the memoir. His brother Elia receives the fullest treatment: ‘He was among hundreds of Peoples’ Liberation Army of Namibia ... volunteers’ and he ‘died in battle’ (p. 22). It is striking that the family details are so limited to the heroic plot. It is also striking that Nujoma tends to view his own family not as objects of personal attachment, but as instances of the broader national struggle. This is not a criticism of Nujoma. He may have felt deep attachment loss, but also believed that his personal grief was not important for this public document. Alternatively, perhaps his emotional predispositions oriented him toward larger groups rather than a narrow circle of acquaintances. For our purposes, the key point is that this is precisely the opposite of what we find in Diescho, with that work’s familial emplotment.

Elia’s death in battle continues to indicate the military and nationalist credentials of Nujoma himself. In keeping with this, the second paragraph, devoted to Nujoma’s own boyhood, recounts how he and other boys ‘trained [them]selves in the art of hitting back’ and sang a song ‘about how to fight the white man in self-defence’ (p. 23). The paragraph almost ideally illustrates our main concerns in the preceding pages. As a child, Nujoma must have engaged in all sorts of activities. However, he focuses on those activities that are consistent with a heroic emplotment. Moreover, his own nationalist profile of motivation as a youth – manifest in ‘train[ing] ... in the art of hitting back’ – is literally the result of a heroic narrative, in this case one presented in a song (p. 23).

These opening pages establish a pattern that Nujoma follows throughout much of the rest of the book, with necessary variations and deviations, depending on just what was happening in Namibia and in his own life at any given time. For example, when he leaves home for work, this gives him occasion to criticise ‘traditional Chiefs and Headmen who collaborated with the colonial administrators’ (p. 27). In direct contrast with Diescho, it does not give occasion for lamentation about familial separation. Rather, Nujoma takes up the heroic concern regarding collaborationism.

The second chapter continues many of the same concerns, as we would expect. It stresses Nujoma’s interest in ‘soldiers’ (p. 33), his willingness to resort to force in

the face of colonialism ('At times, we kicked some white boys who referred to us as "Kaffirs"', [p. 33]), and asserts that he was 'not afraid of the whites' (p. 34). He returns to legitimate government, associated with some traditional chiefs (Kutako and Witbooi in particular) and their good collaborator, Scott. He recounts getting married and refers briefly to the children born over the following years. He does express regret that he was in exile at the time his daughter died (p. 41), but he does not develop the point. This is particularly striking, since it is one of the places where Nujoma could easily have elaborated the memoir in the direction of a family separation narrative. He clearly chose not to do that and to proceed instead with the heroic plot. In keeping with this, on the same page where he discusses his daughter's death, he explains that he and his comrades 'were inspired by the seizure of power by Sukarno of Indonesia' and 'by Abdul Nasser's victory against Britain, France and Israel for control of the Suez Canal' (p. 41), exemplary heroic events.

Much of the memoir is rightly concerned with Nujoma's meetings with heads of state, his speeches to various international groups, SWAPO decisions, and so on. There are personal anecdotes as well. These are often of a manly, angry, and heroic nature. For example, in one case, confronted by a 'chief of Special Branch', thus a powerful South African official, he 'caught' the man 'firmly and threw him back in the car' (p. 43). Later, encountering the same fellow, he 'pulled him over the counter' so that he 'appeared to be hurt on his shoulders' (p. 61).

Accounts of individual, manly conflict soon lead to more organised resistance. The fourth chapter turns to the Windhoek uprising. This was a specific action of resistance against the colonialist appropriation of land. It resulted in defeat for the in-group and led directly to the exile of the legitimate leaders of the nation, including Nujoma himself. Moreover, this exile was specifically designed 'to prepare ... for a protracted armed liberation struggle' (p. 77). The events recounted in this chapter are of course intrinsically important. Moreover, they are in fact broadly congruent with the heroic prototype. This does not, however, mean that Nujoma's retelling of the events is not to some extent organised and oriented by that prototype. For example, the 'armed liberation struggle' was not initiated for another seven years, while this emplotment stresses the close interrelation between the exile and the militancy. More broadly, he tacitly understands the uprising as an episode in a larger narrative trajectory of heroic nationalism – not as, say, a legal dispute or an instance of intra-national class conflict. Perhaps most significantly, Nujoma has in effect continued to present a series of heroic invasion/defence/displacement narratives. Some have been large-scale; others have been more local. There was the initial German conquest, then the South African take-over. These enabled the more local instances – initially, more or less individual confrontations (such as Nujoma's encounters with the Special Branch chief), culminating in this collective act of resistance, which marked the turning point of exile and thus preparation for the real battle. This uprising was, then, a particular narrative 'juncture' at which a repeating sequence from the genre prototype (a sequence comprising invasion and dispossession) transitions to a new sequence of events through the key genre element of exile.

Once again, a striking feature of this emplotment is that – despite being a memoir – it downplays the (‘feminine’) family separation and stresses the (‘masculine’) heroic conflict. Thus, having arrived at the topic of exile, Nujoma mentions that he ‘said good-bye to [his] wife and small children’. But that familial separation merits only a single sentence. He then turns to his ‘final meeting with Chief Hosea Kutako’, the main instance of true traditional leadership. In keeping with the heroic emplotment, Nujoma’s exile is characterised primarily as a heroic and nationalist event, a deferral of the time when he could ‘come back and play my leadership role in ensuring the creation of a free and independent Namibia’ (p. 81).

There is no need to continue going through *Where Others Wavered* in this detail. The point about its heroic emplotment should be clear. To a great extent, what follows in the memoir are either accounts of important events (selected and construed in order to fit the broader heroic structure) or elaborations of episodes in the heroic structure. As to the latter, a common strategy of writers in traditional genres is to expand on sections of the genre. This is easy for Nujoma to do, since he is drawing on autobiographical events. Thus the fifth chapter sets out the particulars of how he left South West Africa to begin his exile. In other words, this chapter elaborates on the exile portion of the heroic prototype. Unsurprisingly, a prominent part of the memoir’s elaboration concerns the armed struggle. For example, he devotes an entire section to the ‘First acquisition of arms’ (p. 129). In itself, this acquisition of a mere ‘four weapons’ (p. 129) was almost trivial. Its significance comes from its place in the larger narrative. He dilates on the early military actions as well, stressing not only their heroic qualities, but also their betrayal by collaborators.

An illuminating example of the operation of selection may be found in Nujoma’s and Diescho’s very different uses of quotations from a single speech by Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo. Nujoma begins his quotation with Ya Toivo’s explanation that he uses ‘we’ because he is not speaking ‘only for [him]self’ (p. 175). This ‘we’ is of course defined by an identity category, and in this case by a heroic enemy. As Ya Toivo puts it, ‘We are Namibians [the identity in-group] and not South Africans [the identity out-group]’ (p. 176). He goes on to present the standard heroic emplotment that ‘South Africa [is] an intruder in our country’ (p. 177) and to reject their ‘right to govern’ (p. 176). He affirms the virtue of loyalty to Namibia and denounces betrayal; he celebrates the bravery of the militants (p. 177). The theme of masculinity is broached directly in the final quoted sentence, ‘I am proud that my countrymen have taken up arms for their people and I believe that anyone who calls himself a man would not despise them’ (p. 177).

Diescho chose to quote from the same speech by Ya Toivo for his epigraph to *Born of the Sun* (see Gijón, 2014, p. 36, which shows where the passage in Diescho fits in the ellipses of the larger quote in Nujoma). Rather than celebrating heroic manliness, however, Diescho’s quotation appeals to compassion. Specifically, the quoted passage begins by stating that Ya Toivo and his ‘co-accused ... have suffered’. It goes on to question the necessity of in-group/out-group divisions, stating that ‘human suffering has its effects even on those who impose it’. Still more surprising,

it ends by saying that 'Only when South Africans realise this and act on it, will it be possible for us to stop our struggle for freedom and justice in the land of our birth' (Diescho, 1988, p. vi). Nujoma's quotations suggest that the only way to achieve freedom and justice in Namibia is to defeat the enemy in military struggle. Diescho's quotation, in contrast, implies that the way to achieve such goals is to foster empathy in the hearts of South Africans. The statements are all there in Ya Toivo's speech. But the emplotment of Namibian history changes what is selected by each author and how it is construed. The heroic emplotment makes the speech manly and heroic. The familial emplotment makes it more feminine and empathic, even almost familial.

From this point on, Nujoma's memoir stresses the military struggle, going so far as to claim that 'Non-violence ... only worsened our plight' (Nujoma, 2001, p. 182). In keeping with this emplotment, Nujoma explains that the name 'Namibia' refers to 'the land of the brave' (p. 188), giving the entire nation a heroic orientation. The coming of independence is presented as a clear military victory for SWAPO and its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). By the late 1980s, 'the enemy realised that its war machinery was broken' and 'had neither the capacity nor the stamina to match' PLAN and its military allies; 'It was obvious that the enemy was defeated' (p. 387). Of course, Nujoma does not deny the role of political negotiation and diplomacy. The resolution of the conflict is, however, fundamentally a military matter, the narrative trajectory primarily heroic.

Finally, the conclusion of the work, though not utopian, is somewhat idealising, again in keeping with the heroic genre. Nujoma acknowledges difficulties, but nonetheless presents a somewhat rosy picture of independent Namibia (see the essays in Melber, 2003, for a more critical assessment). Nujoma particularly stresses the 'unique' quality of the Namibian constitution, which 'has been applauded all over the world by scholars and politicians alike' (2001, p. 430). The point is not unreasonable – and independent Namibia is undoubtedly an immeasurably better place for its citizens than apartheid South West Africa. Moreover, one hardly needs to invoke heroic emplotment to explain why an autobiography might end with a positive assessment of the subject's accomplishments. Nonetheless, such idealisation is part of the genre and here it contributes to the larger heroic emplotment of Namibian history and nationalism.

BORN OF THE SUN

Born of the Sun is a work of fiction, not a memoir. More significantly, it was written during the culminating years of the freedom struggle. As such, it is a piece of engaged writing, very different from the retrospective reflections of Nujoma's work. It also deals with a 'nobody', an ordinary village Namibian (Muronga) who becomes part of the struggle – at genuine personal risk – rather than the (usually safer and often more comfortable) leadership. There are of course connections between the two works. Most obviously, the events of the novel take place at the time when

SWAPO and PLAN were beginning their military campaign and *Born of the Sun* ends with the hero, Muronga, deciding to go into exile, joining SWAPO and perhaps PLAN. The emplotment of the two stories, as well as their emotional and gender orientations, are, however, poles apart. *Born of the Sun* is a sacrificial familial separation narrative. It has moments where heroic events are implied, but these are isolated and unelaborated. Rather, the novel forcefully develops feelings of attachment and fosters a motivational profile bearing not on manly violence, but on the improvement of society for one's children.

We see the difference in the works already in the titles. Though *Born of the Sun* could have heroic resonances, the novel develops the image of birth with particular vividness. Indeed, the novel begins with Muronga's wife giving birth. What is perhaps most remarkable about this opening is the way it elaborates in such detail the empathic sensitivity of Muronga, particularly as that sensitivity is enhanced by attachment bonds. Speaking of their relationship generally, the narrator reports that 'Even when asleep, Muronga can hear [his wife's] slightest movements since he is totally with her in spirit' (Diescho, 1988, p. 5). In connection with this, he notices simply from her movements that she is suffering. He rushes off to the midwife, pathetic in his misery that his dear Makena is 'in great pain' (p. 7). Indeed, his attachment bond pushes him beyond mere empathy to the wish 'that he could participate in her pain' or at least 'hold [her] shoulders' (p. 10).

Thus *Born of the Sun* begins with a birth, as the title suggests. But it is not the birth of the hero. It is the birth of a small child, Mandaha, who will be the object of his parents' affections. This is not the birth of Sam Nujoma, destined to greatness. It is the birth of a creature that needs nurturing and love. Like Nujoma, this tiny child has heroism in his ancestry. Rather than killing a person (the Portuguese soldier [Nujoma, 2001, p. 19]), Mandaha's uncle killed a lion (Diescho, 1988, p. 12). Moreover, this heritage does not seem to incline Muronga to manly combat. The first 'manly deeds' of Muronga are making love to his wife (p. 5). Later, we learn that his greatest accomplishments are as a musician (p. 22). Unlike Nujoma (who has little to say about his family), Muronga is focused intently on the baby, due to a quickly developing attachment bond. For example, when 'The baby starts to cry,' Muronga 'plays with [the baby's] fingers' (p. 19). This careful development of familial attachment is obviously a key emotional feature of the familial separation genre, particularly in its sacrificial form.

Before continuing with the novel, however, we might return briefly to the titles. Diescho's title anticipates this opening birth. Nujoma's title, in contrast, is an assertion of his own manly, heroic bravery. *Where Others Wavered* suggests others' fear and Nujoma's courage. It is a particularly significant title in relation to *Born of the Sun* because the novel ends precisely with Muronga's hesitations. In other words, Muronga is one of those 'others' who 'wavered'. He does eventually join the independence struggle. His wavering is, however, not the result of a simple lack of physical courage. Rather, it is the result of the contradictory impulses of his attachment bonds. He recognises that he has reason to go home, on the one hand,

and reason to join SWAPO in exile, on the other hand. He opts to sacrifice his own attachment needs – and perhaps his own life – for the eventual betterment of society in service of his and other Namibians' families. The wavering is a part of his emotional profile, which is itself inseparable from the familial emplotment of the work. Moreover, Muronga's ambivalence is crucial to the motivational profile of the work for readers. Through this ambivalence, Diescho acknowledges that there are different emotional and ethical values and that these are not always consistent with one another. The resolute firmness of Nujoma's title works against such ambiguity (perhaps necessarily, given his position in the movement).

Diescho begins the novel with a birth and its aftermath. He also suggests an ideal of fatherhood – the deep bonding attachment and empathic sensitivity of Muronga. The political point of this is soon made clear. Uncle Ndara, the lion-killer, explains his people's political traditions. The ruler of the people, he explains, should 'act like a father' (p. 24). Since we have just witnessed Muronga's behaviour, we know what this means. If the ruler does not act like a father, the people can reject him. Like Nujoma, Diescho characterises South African rule in Namibia as illegitimate, as, of course, it was. The details – the emotional and motivational profiles – of that characterisation are, however, very different. In *Born of the Sun*, this illegitimacy is not due to a manly conflict in battle, but a deficiency in family feeling. The point recalls the epigraph of the novel, discussed in the preceding section. That epigraph appeals to the compassion of South Africans witnessing the suffering of Namibians. Later, Nujoma develops this characterisation in relation to collaborationists. Specifically, he represents the latter not in the way they are treated through Nujoma's heroic emplotment, but in familial terms. Muronga's friend, Kaye, explains that the 'white men's boys ... do not see us as their brothers' (p. 84).

After the political critique regarding national leaders and fatherhood, Diescho turns to cultural colonialism. Specifically, he explains how Christian missionaries reject marriages, such as his deep and loving union with Makena, as 'sin' (p. 28). Christian missionaries had much to answer for in the colonial period. Diescho could have chosen any number of topics to criticise, but he particularly stresses church interference in familial bonds. This point is clearly selected in part due to the familial emplotment of nationalism in the novel. Perhaps the emotional behaviours most contradictory with that of attachment-based compassion are humiliation and shaming, motivated by disdain and disgust. In keeping with this, Diescho stresses that the Christians teach that sex not sanctioned by Christian marriage (and thus prior conversion) is 'an act which brings shame' (p. 29). Here, too, Diescho could have chosen many forms of shame or humiliation, and many related emotions. He chose marital sex, linked not only with desire but with attachment.

It is important to note that the stress on family, in both the novel and the narrative genre more generally, is not exclusive. Indeed, the point is crucial for the nationalist themes of the novel. If one bonded only with members of one's family, it might be difficult to extend such feelings to the non-familial relations that define the nation. Of course, instrumental nationalism would remain – the desire to better society

in order to better the situation of one's own child. But Diescho is clearly aiming for a fuller nationalist commitment, one that engages the reader's sympathies with Namibian children generally, not merely one's own children.

This broadening of the attachment concern is in part achieved by extending deep attachment to friendship. Muronga's (non-familial) attachment bond with Kaye is almost as profound as that with Makena. The two are 'pleased ... to join each other in laughter, in talk, in life' (p. 63). They eat from the same plate and their 'fingers touch' as they do so (p. 64). The image is important, for it suggests the complete lack of disgust – the precise opposite of the attitude of racist Whites. Indeed, this commensal sharing, with its implications of mutual attachment, is immediately linked with their own traditions, and contrasted with the practices of racist Whites. Thus Muronga observes that 'white people do not eat out of the same plates.' Kaye suggests a possible consequence – 'Maybe that's why they are such lonely people' (p. 64). Indeed, there is even a hint here that the violence of White people may have something to do with this inhibition of attachment bonds.

Here again there is a point of similarity and contrast with Nujoma. Both stress the importance of tradition in opposition to colonialism. But the part of tradition stressed by Diescho is not martial; it is affectionate. Moreover, rather than the masculine and heroic values of Nujoma's tradition, the values of Diescho's tradition are feminine and attachment-defined. Indeed, there is a homoerotic element in the relationship of Muronga and Kaye. On their journey to their jobs, the two men 'put their mats next to one another on the ground' to sleep (p. 112). Subsequently, we learn that 'To be next to each other is one of the things they always wish for' (p. 119). Indeed, this affectionate intimacy prepares for the introduction of a topic that one would not expect in a heroic nationalist work – homosexuality. Diescho's treatment of the topic is in some ways crude by today's Western, academic standards. However, it presents gay sexuality as perfectly normal – precisely because it is pervaded by attachment. Muronga explains that the men involved 'are friends who stand by each other'. He concludes that 'there is the kind of warmth, understanding, love and caring that exists between them as there is between me and my wife' (p. 191). This is part of the attachment-based, familial emplotting of the work, a clear case of selection (treating homosexuality, rather than ignoring it) and construal (explaining homosexual pair bonding in terms of ordinary attachment). It is testimony to the 'resistant' gender politics of the work (in keeping with its 'feminine' attachment concerns) that Muronga asserts that 'these are men, real men' (p. 191). There are relatively few references to 'real manhood' in the novel. It is suggestive that one of them concerns gay men.

After he introduces the friendship of Muronga and Kaye, Diescho turns to SWAPO and PLAN or rather its predecessor, the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA). SWAPO is introduced through the laughable propaganda of the South African government. Clearly, the reader is supposed to find this propaganda ludicrous. Nonetheless, there is little of the heroic characterisation of SWALA that we find in Nujoma's heroic emplotment. This is one of the points where Diescho

might have begun to develop heroic elements in the narrative. But he does not, just as Nujoma does not develop attachment elements.

As we saw, Nujoma used the early part of his autobiography to set up a background of bravery and confrontation. This led to a key narrative juncture – the Windhoek Uprising and the subsequent heroic exile of the rightful leaders of the nation. Similarly, Diescho uses the early part of his novel to set up a background of attachment. This leads to a key narrative juncture – indeed, it is in part the same juncture, exile. However, in this case, it is an exile from attachment bonds necessitated by the South African taxation system. This fosters a different sort of emotional and motivational profile. Rather than encouraging an angry confrontation, it suggests a response of compassion for those suffering in an inhumane system. In short, it develops feelings consistent with the sympathy referred to in the novel's epigraph from *Ya Toivo*. Moreover, just as Nujoma repeated sequences from the heroic narrative, Diescho repeats this attachment separation. Specifically, Muronga is first painfully exiled from Makena and their son. He is then parted from Kaye. This double exile creates the tension that pervades the remainder of the novel – Muronga's desire to return home for the reunion with his family and friend, a feeling shared by the reader.

Once Muronga reaches the mines, the main themes of the novel are made more explicit. For example, when he encounters the humiliating cruelty of others, he wonders at their 'contempt', reflecting that 'their souls must be troubled, and they must be suffering, for it is only a dead heart that does not feel pain when pain is inflicted on another' (p. 182). As in the epigraph from *Ya Toivo*, the main motivational appeal here is to compassion. In this case, it is to an acceptance of one's spontaneous, empathic feelings. Through Muronga, Diescho suggests that such feelings must trouble even oppressors, who must then suppress their compassionate thoughts and emotions. Once more, this is a theme far more consistent with an attachment-based emplotment than with a heroic one.

Subsequently, there are points where Diescho might have developed heroic motifs. For example, responding to 'humiliation,' Muronga almost engages in the sort of physical combat that we found in Nujoma (e.g. in his encounters with the Special Branch chief). But 'wisdom prevails, and he controls his anger' (p. 194). The point is made in an earlier scene. Responding to a conflict in the village, one 'elder' observed that we should not 'fight like animals'. Rather 'people meet ... to talk with respect for one another' (p. 95) – a very non-heroic attitude. Indeed, only a few pages later, thinking about SWAPO (called 'UPO' or 'United People's Organization' in the novel), Muronga wonders, 'How can you free anybody by killing?' (p. 199) – a very different attitude from Nujoma's contention that 'Non-violence ... only worsened our plight' (Nujoma, 2001, p. 182).

Eventually, Muronga does become convinced of the value of SWAPO. His conviction is, however, not heroic; it is a conviction founded on a familial emplotment. Specifically, he reflects that he hopes SWAPO achieves their goals 'so that my son, Mandaha, can see' the new society (Diescho, 1988, p. 201).

Moreover he himself feels that 'he is not alone' (p. 207) when he joins in solidarity – and affection – with others working against the cruelty of apartheid. Further in keeping with the familial emplotment, Diescho explains that the activists do feel 'fear' (unlike the unwavering and manly warriors of Nujoma's memoir), but their leader – like a parent – gives them a 'sense of security' (p. 219). In keeping with this, when arrested, the greatest suffering Muronga experiences is being separated from the comrades to whom he feels attached (see p. 243 and p. 287). He does come to believe that he must 'fight for our right to be equals with the white man' (p. 247). But his concrete plan in this regard is not a matter of acquiring firearms. Rather, he determines that he will 'learn to read and write' (p. 246). He subsequently reiterates the themes first broached in the epigraph to the novel. Specifically, he explains, 'understanding does matter. ... The white man doesn't know how much we suffer' (p. 262). In contrast, manly physical violence is associated with the cruelty of the South African government and its African collaborators. For example, when brutally beating Muronga, one White policeman observes that 'We are teaching him a bit of manhood' (p. 284).

This leads us to the ending of the novel. Muronga is being returned to South West Africa due to his political activity. There is some risk that he will be arrested at that point or later. Risking that return provides the only opportunity he is likely to have for being reunited with his family. While in Botswana, on his way to South West Africa, he is offered the opportunity to enter SWALA. After a night of terrible internal conflict, he decides to join the rebels. The ending is peculiar. It is to some extent heroic, since the appeal to Muronga explicitly refers to the 'brave men' who have 'decided to use the barrel of the gun to try to get [their] country back' (p. 298). Moreover, in a dream, Muronga seems to give up on the idea of appealing to the compassion of Europeans, concluding that 'white people ... have no hearts' (p. 302) – an idea that seems to justify the killing of Whites. In other words, the novel suddenly seems to turn toward the heroic plot at the end, even though this is inconsistent with everything that has gone before.

On the other hand, this may simply be another one of those moments where a heroic motif appears, only to be superseded by the familial plot. Specifically, Muronga decides to join the resistance, even though he 'may never see [his family] again' (p. 298). He does this because 'Freedom comes only through ... sacrifice' (p. 307). By sacrificing his own reunion with his family, he will make for a better future for both his family and for all the other families in Namibia. In short, the final emplotment follows the general outline of the sacrificial version of the family separation and reunion narrative. At the same time, it may be combined with the sacrificial genre proper, the genre in which the home society is restored to well-being by the death of an innocent victim. The ending of the novel is in this way generically ambiguous. It can be read heroically (if we imagine Muronga killing) or sacrificially (if we imagine him being killed). In both cases, however, it is clear that the primary emotional orientation of the conclusion is attachment related and the primary emplotment is familial.

CONCLUSION: A NOTE ON CAUSES AND EFFECTS

The preceding analyses, if successful, should have done three things. First, they should have suggested the cognitive force of cross-culturally predominant story structures or genres. Second, they should have indicated the close relation of emplotment to readers' emotional and motivational profiles, its connection with political themes and with gender, and its operation in the fostering of categorial identifications. Finally, they should have revealed unexpected coherences within – and unexpected contrasts between – Nujoma's and Diescho's important narratives of Namibian nationalism. The points are not by any means without practical, political consequences. As Melber points out, 'anticolonial wars were hardly a suitable environment for instilling, cultivating, internalising and implementing democratic values and norms' (Melber, 2003, p. 5). The problem is largely a matter of the actual practice of warfare. But it is not unrelated to emplotment. As Melber notes, Southern African societies have witnessed 'a new ruling political elite ... based upon ... selective narratives', among other factors (p. 10). A particularly striking case of the difference comes with Diescho's humane view of gay sexuality and Nujoma's 'shrill campaign against homosexuality' (Saul & Leys, 2003, p. 72.).

These various points raise the question of whether, in any given case, the emplotment determines the desired motivational profile or the desired profile determines the genre. In other words, they raise the question of whether Nujoma's and Diescho's politics determined their choice of narrative or their choice of narrative determined their politics.

Needless to say, this is a complex issue that cannot be treated adequately in a few paragraphs. It is possible, however, to give a brief, if general answer: presumably the causality goes in both directions. Writers and readers begin with some well-established ways of thinking about nationalism. These include standard models and standard genres for emplotment. Everything else being equal, we are inclined to draw on those common structures. Moreover, the structures themselves are often hierarchised. Nationalism is therefore most commonly emplotted in heroic terms. None of this absolutely confines us to such structures; nor does it guarantee that we will all choose the same genres when we are so confined. Indeed, we may resist the lure of nationalist emplotment of any sort, preferring to stress some other feature of a situation (such as class or individual existential condition). Nonetheless, the standard structures are standard precisely because they are more likely to draw our interest and selection. Moreover, such structures are more likely to appeal to other people, thus to give an author's narratives greater general acceptance. In short, our initial emotional response to a situation and our preliminary understanding of a sequence of events will precede and in part orient our choices regarding emplotment. Those choices are very likely to be limited by prominent narrative prototypes.

I should stress that such genre selection is almost always un-selfconscious. One does not think, 'I'll emplot Namibian history in heroic terms.' Rather, one focuses one's attention on certain sorts of event that seem most relevant and significant; one

stresses certain sorts of causal relation; one feels a certain way and seeks to cultivate certain emotions and certain values through one's treatment of the material. Those choices are not random, but are related to genre structures – initially helping to activate those structures cognitively and emotively, and subsequently being elaborated and re-oriented by the structures.

This leads us to the issue of what happens after one has (tacitly) 'selected' a genre. Here, the same duality recurs. In part, Diescho's imagination of Muronga's experiences is guided by prior feelings and interests. In part, it results from knowledge about particular conditions and circumstances in Namibia. But it is also in part the result of the genre. The genre will highlight certain sorts of events or conditions, suggest certain causal relations, and foster certain emotions. These (cyclical) effects are particularly consequential as they regularly extend beyond the story world of the work itself, reaching out into one's relation to the real world of social and political action.

Put simply, emplotment is not an all-determining feature of nationalism. But it is also far from being neutral. It is highly consequential in shaping the ways in which we understand and respond to national history and current conditions. The point applies no less to Namibia and Namibian literature than to any other country or literary tradition. Nujoma's memoir and Diescho's novel are exemplary instances of such shaping.

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5

The forgotten child of Namibia: An analysis of Misheke Matongo's autobiography

Jason Owens and Sarala Krishnamurthy

INTRODUCTION

The 'GDR Kids' of Namibia are the remnants of a forgotten yet important part of Namibian history, the pre-independent times of this country. The 1990s were the era of the freedom struggle for Namibia, a disjuncture from apartheid and finally, the formation of a new government, which arose from a political party in exile, SWAPO. The GDR Kids, children of political exiles who were brought up in East Germany, known then as the German Democratic Republic, were considered controversial since many of them were marginalised by their own families when they returned to Namibia. Misheke Matongo was one of these and his unpublished autobiography provides a fascinating account of his time in East Germany before the collapse of the Berlin Wall and his subsequent return to Namibia. This chapter examines Matongo's manuscript in three sections, namely, as literature, as a self-aware autobiographical work and as a message which the content conveys.

MISHEKE MATONGO – THE FORGOTTEN CHILD OF NAMIBIA

True to the ambiguity which surrounded many aspects of the GDR Kids' lives, Matongo's work cannot easily be categorised. While a traditional autobiography

relates the author's experiences throughout life, a classic memoir focuses on the author's role during a specific period or sequence of events. Matongo's manuscript deals with both aspects of presentation.

In a brief description, Matongo (1997) relates his first three years as a refugee in Angola and ends his manuscript relating the first seven years of the experiences of the GDR Kids on their return to an independent Namibia. The main content of his document deals with Matongo's arrival in the German Democratic Republic in 1982 to his departure from the crumbling East German state in 1990. His own awareness of the eight years which he spent in the German Democratic Republic seems to have been the apex and defining period of his life and may have compelled him to take the unusual step of writing his autobiography as a young man, as though he did not expect any further experiences in later life to equal these early experiences.

The question arises whether Matongo's manuscript provides sufficient material for a book or whether it only has enough material for an essay or an article. Then, too, the question arises, whether he has devoted more material on the fates of individuals and the fate of the whole GDR group than to his own fate. He refers to his text as a book seven times. Matongo contradicts his stated aim of not concentrating on the fates of individuals. The uncertainty of the border between his own story and the story of the GDR Kids as a group is soon evident in his manuscript: 'I love to spend afternoons continuously weaving together lost threads of memory. The only thing I'm sure of is that I'm not the only one. I am one of around 400 Namibian kids who were sent from Angola to the GDR' (p. 2).

Karl Weintraub (1975, p. 824) describes autobiography as 'a weave in which self-consciousness is delicately threaded throughout interrelated experience.' In this case, the narrative's 'red thread,' which is what the Germans call a connecting principle, is 'red', namely, socialist, in the sense that it privileges the GDR Kids as a group over the individual. Matongo's book does not fabricate or 'spin' events as so often done in politics, nor can it stand as definitive history. Our chapter endorses Ormond Seavey's (1988, p. 8) assertion that '[a]ll autobiographies, even the most honest, distort the lives they describe, in the same way that depictive art distorts the material depicted.' Therefore, we explore both the literary and historical facets of Matongo's writings.

Traditional male autobiography, exemplified by Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, chronicles a progression of triumphs with little reflection on faults or flaws (Seavey, 1988). By contrast, Matongo's autobiography includes incidents of his being abused, of wronging a teacher, of confessing an unrequited crush for the first time, and of shoplifting. Such candour is all the greater a departure in the light of Matongo's having been raised on communist principles which emphasised perseverance in the face of adversity and certain victory in the end.

Barbara Kosta (1994, p. 5) asserts that the author should be 'read as one possible site of meaning, as a point of departure and not as the focus and absolute meaning or conclusion.' With Matongo's text serving as a map, our critique now embarks

on the series of arrivals and departures that characterise his life and those of his fellow GDR Kids.

UPROOTEDNESS AND LONGING: *TABULA RASA* AND TRANSFERENCE

In chronicling the exile of the GDR Kids, we emphasise uprootedness and the twin results of the children's having put down roots in the GDR, namely, *socialistisation* and *deracination*, two terms coined for the purposes of this analysis and defined below.

The first theme in the GDR Kids' saga is that of uprootedness. For many children, this was violent. The bombing of the SWAPO settlement at Cassinga, Angola, by South African forces on 4 May 1978 blew families apart, both literally and figuratively. Children were orphaned and siblings separated as various relief organisations sought to provide them with refuge from the war. Matongo was not present at the Cassinga massacre, but the protection of the children from another such attack hastened the East German programme and their departure from their parents. Instead of dealing directly with the mental scars of refugee life and separation, Matongo has projected these emotional wounds onto the physical scars borne by two of his fellow GDR Kids who had survived Cassinga:

Napalm, named after the firebombs, had burn wounds on his whole body that he will likely never be rid of. Mandala, whose right leg and left hand were crippled. Today, they cannot remember any of this. Time has closed their wounds. But I wonder every time I think of them whether they don't think back on their past in still moments of deep sorrow. (p. 3)

Clearly, Matongo knows all too well that in addition to physical marks, uprootedness leaves psychological scars, of which longing is one of the main symptoms. Matongo's family was not among those at Cassinga, although they were in Angola, thus his earliest memories were not of the violence of war, but of the painful separation resulting from war:

A blue sky hangs above me. I must be three years old on this beautiful afternoon watching longingly as the army land rover drives away. I remember a tear standing in my eye. I must have really been hung up on someone who was just pulling away. Is that my father, whom I never knew, disappearing around the bend? I don't know, and I probably never will. ... The car is gone, just like a part of my memory of my childhood in Angola, where I was born. I see two women wringing out a blanket they've washed in front of a building made of loam. I don't recognize their faces anymore. Is one of them my mother? (p. 1)

Matongo's focus is on forming a picture of family and its disintegration. Through rhetorical questions, he reiterates the loss and sense of powerlessness he felt. In

narrating the bus trip from his home to the airport, he employs a metaphor to describe the fine line between protection and confinement:

Strangely enough, I remember a birdcage with three little birds inside fluttering around restlessly. But since I cannot connect this with the chain of events, I think I must have fallen asleep and seen the birds in the cage in a dream. I only question why I have retained this dream so well up to today. (p. 4)

One wonders if this is a conscious metaphor, a literary flourish, a vehicle for expressing his view of the situation upon reflecting on it as an adult, or a memory he himself has not yet fully analysed. Although Matongo does not make explicit his own feelings of powerlessness, he concentrates on the birds, which are confined in – and yet protected by – a cage and a keeper. A parallel to the situation in the birdcage becomes clear when the young children find themselves in a cage of steel in the Interflug jet flying to the GDR.

ARRIVAL: PUTTING DOWN NEW ROOTS

On 2 February, 1982, a group of 50 three- to five-year-old Namibian children arrived at East Berlin's Schönefeld airport. Matongo writes:

It hurt to leave the plane because it was nice and warm and radiated security that calmed each of us. But we were hardly out of the plane when a wave of ice-cold wind hit us around our ears. It was winter. ... Our training [gym] suits didn't help very much to keep the cold from our bodies. (pp. 7–8)

Just as the abrupt contrast in temperature overwhelmed their bodies, the starkly unfamiliar environment overwhelmed their emotions and senses:

As fascinating as all this looked, I still heard some crying for home. ... So much new, so much strange presented to us all at once; we spent the whole journey with wide-open eyes. Our noses pressed flat against the windows. (p. 9)

Although memories may be enshrined on paper, they are not set in stone; that is to say, they are not infallible. When childhood events are recounted, these may be the result of suggestions by adults, especially of the East Germans who were undoubtedly taking a first good look at their new charges and Matongo's observations when a new group of children arrived in Germany.

The arrival marked the start of the adjustment to a new life for these young children for whom change seemed to be the only constant in their lives. The most jarring change started with their being put onto a military truck in Angola, then on an airplane to East Germany and finally onto a bus which took them to a palace in a fairy-tale world of things unimagined.

The palace, Schloss Bellin, was at that time a part of the Schwerin district in East Germany, and had been granted to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*) (SED) which had forced the fusion of the German Communist and Socialist Parties which ruled the GDR throughout its 40 year history. The SED had initially used Schloss Bellin as a school to teach its own functionaries and it was then used as a school for the children of Namibia, named a *Kinderheim* (a home for children). The staff of the school were called *Erzieherinnen* who functioned as teachers, governesses and nannies. The children had expected shelter but were surprised by the abundance which they encountered.

Their first meal consisted of a German dish called Sauerkraut, which was alien to them then.

None of us liked its taste, and still it was hoisted upon us. Often, the sauerkraut ended up not in our mouths but in our laps [sic] or even in our pockets. It was irritating for our *Erzieherinnen*, who then had to go to the trouble of washing us and wiping all the sauerkraut off the floor. It was always so funny to see them scolding us. We didn't understand a single word and stared at them innocently with big eyes. They usually went soft and took us into their arms lovingly. But our campaign against sauerkraut didn't help. We were fed this food until every last one of us had got used to the taste. (p. 11–12)

They became used to the taste of the German food and, in later years, found the porridge which they had loved as toddlers at home, to be tasteless and bland.

Adjusting to new, strange food was easier for most of the children to adjust to than the loss of parents and the family structure, and a new socio-educational structure under the care of an *Erzieherin*, Meme Kerstin, who acted as a surrogate mother for her young charges. They called her Meme Kerstin, 'meme' being the Oshiwambo word for 'woman' and for 'mother'. The depth of the maternal bonds which developed with their 'memes' remained for years after moving away. Several of the East German *Erzieher* and *Erzieherinnen* later visited their former charges in Namibia.

THE SOCIALISTISATION OF THE GDR KIDS

Although the personnel fluctuated, the mission and purpose of the Namibian children's project remained uniform, namely, to produce socialist liberation fighters and cadres. Matongo considers the extent to which the Namibian children were assimilated into socialism not only into the GDR state, but also into the social order of the GDR.

The GDR Kids had landed in a controlled society, in a hyper-controlled institutional structure, without a neutralising, non-overtly-politicised household or the counter-balance of relatives. In becoming less family-oriented, the GDR Kids were becoming exposed to a particularly intensified form of social instruction during

all their waking hours. Weekend activities included dancing and singing, not merely as recreation, but also as a means of incorporating the independence struggle into more hours of each day. The children learned what was expected of them ideologically from their *Erzieherinnen*, who had been selected partially based on their political loyalty. The children's daily portion of 'socialistisation' evoked a political trinity, namely, the ideology of Namibia's SWAPO, the dogma of the GDR government, and that of its protector, the Soviet Union. Their daily diet included equal measures of anti-South African, anti-West German and anti-American indoctrination.

Capitalism was explained as a structure where no one plants anything which will not bring a gain for himself, whilst in a socialist structure, people shared what they had with others. In plays where the capitalist was presented as the 'oppressor' the performance usually ended with a revolution of the working class. Matongo remembers:

There were more than enough events during which SWAPO functionaries admonished us to study diligently in order to support the struggle in Namibia. These events mostly ended in hysterical 'Viva SWAPO!' slogans. We quickly grew to hate these events because we usually had to sit on a rock-hard staircase for hours, which can't be any fun for a five-year-old child. Woe unto you if you nodded off or publicly displayed your tiredness. You were sent to a room where someone reproached you for so long for being a bad SWAPO Pioneer that you really felt like one. (p. 14)

Matongo's bitterness surrounding issues of party spirit and party discipline is evident in his choice of words such as 'hysterical', 'rock-hard', and 'woe'. Later, many GDR Kids became quick to distinguish between *Schein* and *Sein*, between appearance and reality. Their cynicism was likely a backlash, a reaction against the East German and Namibian administrators having systematically obscured the line between fantasy and reality both through rhetoric and through actions. Matongo complains:

Soon we were snowed under with the most diverse manoeuvres. These were so that, if the country still wasn't free when we returned, we would be prepared for the struggle against South Africa. We usually had to run long distances and solve problems; for example 'How does one get across a river without assistance?' We had to find lost "pilots" who were lying somewhere hiding. ... [I]n winter it was pure hell, and we often arrived at the home wet and cold with fingers and ears frozen blue having cried our eyes out. (p. 16–17)

Although the war games were fantasy, as their name implied, the harsh conditions of the winter were real, yet incongruous (extreme cold instead of extreme heat) and of a different magnitude (discomfort instead of death). No SWAPO fighters' ears were frozen blue in tropical combat, but the risky military missions the children were imitating were being undertaken daily by adult Namibians in Angola and northern Namibia. Thus the children were taught stoicism.

The stories which Matongo and the others heard were no more graphic than the violence in some of the tales told to German children, such as in *Hänsel & Gretel*. The crucial difference lay in the immediacy of the dangers depicted. Although SWAPO had evacuated their charges from the physical horrors of war, they made no effort to shelter them from war's emotional horrors. In a sense, SWAPO and the SED were preparing them to enter a job field, but also a minefield. The war games were intended for the children's own good. They were also intended to instil the value of demonstrating the privilege of the group solidarity over the importance of the individual. Their group cohesion has survived that of the GDR.⁴¹

SOCIALISM WITH A CHILDLIKE FACE: THE GDR KIDS' SHELTERED SLICE OF SOCIALIST PARADISE

The GDR Kids realised years later that behind the fables and exercises lay, in effect, a police state. To account for the GDR Kids' lack of scepticism, one must keep in mind that the education of future leaders of the developing world had become a pet project of Margot Honecker who was the East German minister of education and spouse of the head of state and ruling party. These children therefore belonged to a protected elite who were afforded privileges which extended beyond the praise that they received and the strokes to their collective ego for being Namibia's future. They were able to experience socialism as it actually viewed itself: generous, engaged, and cosmopolitan. Whereas for Namibians in SWAPO's struggle, the environment of reference had been a refugee camp, to the Namibians in East Germany, the GDR represented a wealthy ally that had brought them into a world of safety and plenty. The fact was that the GDR Kids were generally confined to small institutions and group homes and schools with all the facilities such as science laboratories and sports fields and they did not lack for anything. In this environment, socialist ideals and practices operated much more smoothly than they did in the country as a whole. Matongo and the other prospective liberation fighters came to believe not only that they had been evacuated from a zone of combat in Angola, but that in East Germany they were at the forefront of global class warfare. The enemy was imagined lurking behind every corner. 'We were told that there were a great number of spies from that 'bad capitalist' Germany who took photos of us in order to betray us to the FRG' (Federal Republic of Germany i.e. West Germany) (pp. 22–23). Given that the children's benefactor, the SED government, was obsessed with the possibility of infiltration from the West, the children were also instilled with an extreme vigilance. While adults may have deemed the GDR government's constant goading towards vigilance against foreign espionage to be merely a pretext for the state's own domestic spying, or a tactic to unite the public against an exaggerated Western enemy, a child's beliefs and actions tend to be congruent.

⁴¹ Bronfenbrenner (1970) writes of similar teaching activities elsewhere in the East Bloc: 'Not only group games, but special complex toys are designed which require the cooperation of two or three children to make them work.' p. 21.

Despite their isolation, the GDR Kids were visible. While the SED sought to keep the children separated from the East German public, outside of Bellin the exotic children were always 'on stage' in whatever activities they participated in. The GDR Kids became aware of their attraction and the importance of their perfect German language skills and Namibian dancing and singing skills. Their experience in East Germany was entirely different from that of the other Namibian children who grew up in other African countries or in countries such as Cuba. No child in those countries could write of defining racial moments of the calibre that Matongo had.

DERACINATION: CONFUSING CULTURE AND CHROMOSOMES

Matongo imbues his autobiography with incidents that symbolise another type of deracination, namely, the loss of racial or ethnic identity in the face of the host country's enveloping culture. Although the American Anthropological Association does not consider the concept of race useful in describing or classifying humanity, researchers recognise the social constructions of black and white, and their impact on the vast majority of the people in Southern Africa. The concepts of 'race' may be constructed, but the results of race are real. The signifying power of skin tone is a vivid factor in Matongo's first memories of leaving Angola to fly to Germany. As the group was assembling on the runway:

A gentleman in uniform comes out of the plane. This time I take to my heels with the others. The reason: the man is white. I must explain here that white people were always connected to the South Africans, so we were justified in thinking this was a South African. This was the first white person that I had ever seen. (p. 5)

Colour remains a focal point upon landing in East Germany where a great number of white people met the people in front of the plane. They were greeted exuberantly and the children were soon laughing about their appearance and their speech. This friendly meaning which the 'whiteness' held for the GDR Kids in East Germany evolved during their stay. In Southern Africa, the children had equated 'whiteness' with 'South African-ness',⁴² representing colonialist occupation forces, but in the GDR, pictures of white communist heroes hung on the walls beside those of black SWAPO leaders. Then too, the children had turned to white mother figures for comfort and so their conception of whiteness was inverted and what had seemed 'bad' became 'good'. Global class warfare replaced strife along racial lines, so categorising people as communists or capitalists became more salient to them than racial categorisation.

⁴² Despite the fact that many SWAPO leaders were educated alongside black South Africans in South Africa, or worked alongside non-white South Africans in Cape Town, where the idea for SWAPO was germinated, 'South Africans' was frequently used in Namibian discourse before independence specifically to mean white South African representatives of the apartheid state.

The first glimpse of the GDR was nevertheless shocking in its whiteness for the young Namibians. Upon leaving East Berlin's airport in a bus Matongo observed:

All around lay sugar. Houses, fields and trees were all covered with it. We were very excited and begged our counsellors and the bus driver to stop so that we could fetch a little. ... And so I learned my first German word, *Schnee*. We christened this new land the 'White Land' because everything appeared to be white. The people, the surroundings, simply everything. (pp. 8–9)

As Matongo's choice of words confirms, in assimilating to the racial assumptions of this overwhelmingly 'White Land,' the children were at first confused and conflated culture, social attitudes and skin colour. Many GDR Kids have since come to associate the sweet, gentle manner of their German nurturers with their white skin. Matongo contrasts this sweetness with the dour, sour methods of black *Erzieherinnen*: 'It was mostly left to the black women who came with us from Angola to beat us, yes, in fact, a white woman or man almost never laid a hand on us. So ... we felt all the more attracted to our white *Erzieherinnen*' (p. 14).

Matongo believed that most of the German *Erzieherinnen* were unhappy about the rough way in which the Namibian *Erzieherinnen* behaved towards the children. This situation contributed towards the development of the GDR Kids' racial consciousness. The German *Erzieherinnen* and teachers often remained in their positions for many years. By contrast, the Namibian adults normally returned to the SWAPO camp in Kwanza Sul, Angola, after two years. Thus, the bonds between the GDR Kids and the Germans were stronger.

Matongo refers to the Namibian *Erzieherinnen* as those 'who came with us from Angola,' or as 'black,' while he refers to the German women as 'white' rather than 'German' or 'local,' conflating 'Germanness' with whiteness. He does not mention the social factor of culture as the determinant of their behaviour.

A CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE IN ANGOLA

In addition to distinctions made about the length of time the GDR Kids spent in the Democratic Republic, one factor discussed less often is the length of time each child had spent in Angola. Some children had only passed through Angola en route from Zambia, whilst some had lived in Angola for the first three to five years of their lives.

Concerned that there was too strong a drift towards the German culture during their stay in East Germany, the SWAPO party arranged for contingents of GDR Kids to travel to Angola during the summer holidays in the mid-1980s to obtain at first-hand an experience of the liberation efforts. Matongo was selected as the leader of the first contingent to visit Angola to applause from the class. In order to travel, he had first to withstand weeks of constant scrutiny: 'Informing was apparently writ large in socialism. Even my comrades were spurred on to observe me and immediately

to report any possible breach of rules.' The honour of his leadership helped to mature Matongo as a responsible adult and aided the development of his self-image.

Throughout his autobiography, Matongo reports at length on airport scenes, drawing attention to the centrality of transience in the GDR Kids' lives. The warmth and protection of the aeroplane were spoilt by the fact that his bag was stolen during a stopover at the airport of Congo-Brazzaville and by the way people stared at them in the airport in Luanda, Angola's capital.

The cultural and economic differences between the group and the Angolans soon became apparent to the visiting children. In the GDR, the danger of an enemy attack had been over-emphasised, whilst in Angola the dangers seemed under-emphasised, even covered up, as though the war was 'far away in the south' until one of the children discovered that he had been sitting on an AK-47 under a blanket in the vehicle they were travelling in. This destroyed the idea of a peace in Angola.

Matongo found that he missed his new home in the GDR and was longing to return to East Germany. He recalled that the *Erzieherinnen* had warned the children to be vigilant regarding Western foreigners in Angola. Matongo was disappointed that his group did not come across any 'capitalists flogging workers with a whip' or 'with money spilling from their pockets'.

What did shock him was the first sight of an albino African – a sight which gave him fear and concern about racialism. The children's biggest question was whether the albino stood on the side of the 'capitalist whites' or with the 'blacks.' The GDR Kids later found themselves the objects of similarly essentialist views of skin colour, epitomised by the book, *Onesmus: White children with black skin in Namibia*⁴³ (Brase & Brase, 1996). Soon the Germanised 'Afrika-Gruppe' of GDR Kids found itself standing out almost to the same extent as the albino. Their strange ways rendered Matongo and his friends cultural 'others,' whilst the albino was a 'biological other.' The incongruity became evident when the dozen GDR Kids visiting Luanda were taken by armed convoy to the SWAPO camp at Kwanza Sul.

Their experience in Germany had marked them different from the residents of the very camp where they themselves lived a few years previously. Matongo described a group of youths who followed them in the camp. He observed that 'Envy was not absent, and soon we noticed that a group of guys was observing us with evil intent' (p. 72). The gulf between the clothing that Matongo's group wore and that of the camp's inhabitants, the GDR Kids' movements, and their body language, marked them as distinct and different. Matongo focuses on what he and the Namibians in Angola had in common, stating: 'It was for me simply incomprehensible how SWAPO Pioneers who lived in a neighbouring country right next to our homeland could be so negative towards us, what with our being on the same side as they were' (p. 74).

This experience served to mould Matongo into a critical observer and ultimately into a biographer. He learnt to see both sides but belong to neither. He also realised

⁴³ *Onesmus: Weisse Kinder mit schwarzer Haut in Namibia*. Onesmus is a common male name in Namibia.

that his group was special and noteworthy. He believed that his month in the refugee camp sobered and matured him and de-romanticised his image of Africa. 'Kwanza-Sul was a milestone towards becoming an adult for me. ... [I]t pulled me out of the dream of a wonderful African continent into the reality of the longing and fear of the people who lived here' (p. 76). He thus had a lead over his classmates in developing critical skills. Most of the GDR Kids did not have the experience of seeing the refugee camps again after having been removed from them as two- to five-year-old children.

After spending a month in Kwanza Sul, the 'Africa Group' returned to their hosts in the Angolan capital. Matongo idolised his host in Luanda, SWAPO Secretary General Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, who had spent years as a political prisoner on Robben Island with leading African National Congress officials, and had known Matongo's father, Greenwell Matongo, Chief Political Commissar of the military wing PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia). The young guests were, however, shocked that 'a few of the minister's bodyguards had tried to get close to the girls physically' (pp. 69–70). This attempted molestation destroyed another of Matongo's assumptions, namely that everyone associated with SWAPO was automatically heroic. Becoming more critical, he began to question his faith in the party's values. '[I]n socialism there should be no classes, why then did Mr Toivo drive around in such a nice car, live in such a nice house, and appear – exactly like his fellows – to have no worries about where the rest of us lived' (p. 77).

Matongo may sound hypocritical when he talks about the lack of transport and poor lodgings of the exiles, but he realises that he is privileged in staying with the camp commander in Kwanza Sul (who was the father of one of the children) and would be returning to Germany to live in the 'palace' to further his education. He also understands that he needs to write down his observations in order to understand the differences, as he says, he needs 'to work through some of it.' (p. 77). He realises that there are some events in his life which he still has to come to terms with. After six weeks in Angola, Matongo left for East Germany from the same airport from which he had left five years previously. He writes:

It was now, however, a totally different feeling. To me, we were heading home. I had seen a lot of suffering and wanted nothing more than to leave. Thinking back on it today, I must have been like a child who is away from his mother for a long time and is now able to return to his family. My family was my group. I loved my group. How much I had missed all of them! Most of all, however, I was looking forward to seeing our *Erzieherinnen*, because they were like parents to us. (p. 78)

The visit to Angola strengthened Matongo's sense of home, namely, of the group home in East Germany being his *Heimat*. He understood what his life would have been like if he had never left Angola, the country where most of the surviving parents of the GDR Kids lived. He thinks as a child returning to his mother. He does not discern the irony of this contradiction with the 'intuitive instinct'

(*Fingerspitzengefühl*) that many GDR Kids had toward their traditional families and traditional family structures. This inability to empathise – as opposed to merely sympathise – comes to the fore especially clearly as Matongo watches the Namibian pre-schoolers with whom he will share this flight to East Germany. He ponders questions that were possibly still beyond him at that early age:

What was really happening here? Did they want to bring all Namibian kids to the GDR? Why were they being given this life without fear to grow up? In order to show them more closely what kind of fear and uncertainty their parents and relatives lived in? What was it good for? What was the education for if one had to go to war and die immediately thereafter? I sat and reflected until the stewardess offered me a cola. (p. 71)

Back in the GDR, his 'Africa Group,' who spent the summer of 1987 in Angola, blended back in with their classmates who had passed the season at a summer camp on the Baltic Sea. Only a small minority of the GDR Kids had the opportunity to spend a few weeks in Angola. Thus, most of them did not have the opportunity that the 'Africa Group' had to realise the extent of their assimilation to East Germany or their estrangement from the culture of their birth.

As young adults, many of the GDR Kids could articulate the interaction of cultural and personal factors that led to their assimilation of 'Germanness.' They could describe the factors such as the unpopularity of the Namibian adults at Bellin, which prompted the children to give up the Namibian aspects of their personalities, and the attraction to German culture which drew them in. Considering the Namibian songs and dances the children had learnt and recited, Matongo writes:

So our Namibian side was well-covered from a cultural standpoint. Nevertheless, it couldn't measure up to our German education. German literature from the Brothers Grimm to Goethe and Schiller was impressed upon us. ... But I believe I speak in the name of all Namibian children in being able to say that after a certain time, we dedicated ourselves much more to German culture and therefore we automatically neglected our Namibian culture. (p. 18)

This macro-cultural affinity was reinforced by micro-personal interactions. Matongo surmises that the GDR Kids became closely, emotionally attached to Germans 'already in earliest childhood; it was to have consequences in later life which we could not have reckoned with at the time' (p. 19). Immersed as they were in the East German doctrines, domestic habits, and demographics, Namibian culture seemed as far away as Namibia itself. Matongo used the metaphor of the Swakop River, which flows only for a few days every few years to describe the process. 'An artificial atmosphere around our culture was thereby established. No one seemed to take it seriously anymore. The enthusiasm that we'd begun with gradually flowed away, like a river that had lost its source (p. 35)'. Matongo could not know that

events would occur over the following two years that would bring him and his schoolmates back to Namibia. The lost river of Namibian culture would come to drown the GDR Kids in 1990.

THE COLLAPSE OF EAST GERMANY LEADS TO A SECOND UPROOTING

While at a holiday camp in 1989, Matongo and his fellows learned of the first in a series of stasis-breaking events that would lead to their disenchantment with East Germany and to their return to Namibia.

One day on television we saw on the news how GDR-citizens went into the streets protesting. It was the first time that we learned anything about the dissatisfaction of the people. Mr Gottwald was on hand very quickly to explain the situation and calm us down. Of course these people were just a few peace-disturbers who were being prodded by the West. At the same time we learned that Namibia would finally achieve independence from the South African regime. (p. 103)

On this single day, the campers and their administrators faced both Namibia's looming independence and the contestation of the SED's power. In short, what the children and the administrators had always hoped would happen and what they had hoped would never happen, both happened at once.

For these young Namibian refugees, early childhood had brought with it the simultaneous loss of the familiar as well as the familial. They had been submerged in an environment that seemed to them fantastic in its wealth, ways, and weather. Cut off as they were from their own roots, the GDR Kids had adopted much of the ideology and culture of East Germany. The dissolution of the German Democratic Republic in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall led to their disillusion and disenchantment with much of what they had been taught.

THE FALL OF THE EAST GERMAN SYSTEM AND THE OCCUPATION OF NAMIBIA

At a stage of development when most adolescents are confronted with either finding their niche in society or rebelling against the establishment, the GDR Kids were confronted with the feeling that the once solid ground of adult expectations and social and political duties and taboos were shifting beneath their feet and had a strong influence on their emotional state. The changes were more disorienting than if each had come separately. The changes in Central Europe and Southern Africa were inter-related. The backdrop of the Cold War had a tremendous influence on Namibian independence. Angola had not only served as the battlefield for the war of the South Africans who were fighting the Namibians, but also as a theatre of a proxy war for the US and USSR. Namibia with its colonial past and economically significant German minority, had been a useful symbol which was employed in the

diplomatic and propaganda rivalries between West and East Germany. Namibia's first national election which was held on the principle of 'one adult, one vote' took place from 7 to 11 November 1989 and it was the last time that East Germany participated in an operation of the United Nations. The GDR Kids were excited by the SWAPO victory as a promise to return to the homeland soon. The news of the SWAPO victory was eclipsed by the news of the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, which Matongo does not address directly.

The first open election in the GDR occurred a mere three days before Namibia's independence. The conservative Christian Democrats won more parliamentary seats than the pro-worker Social Democrats and the SED-successor Party of Democratic Socialism combined. The children's 'persecutors' in Pretoria, and their 'protectors' in the wealthy neighbourhood of Pankow in East Berlin, were simultaneously swept from power.

FROM SOLIDARITY TO SOLITARY: WE ARE THE PEOPLE! (*WIR SIND DAS VOLK!*)

The social impact of the political changes in the GDR soon began to make themselves felt in the daily lives of the GDR Kids. They were suddenly confronted with their 'non-Germanness' in the eyes of the public.

Relations with the Germans got increasingly worse. Neo-Nazis surfaced from almost every corner and we, younger ones, were forbidden from walking alone through the streets. When our class made an excursion to Magdeburg, a youth with an open knife chased us from the centre of town to the railway station. Our legs were all shaking from fear. (p. 107)

Matongo's tale of broken friendships and broken windows evokes memories of the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis during *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) during which shop and synagogue windows were broken and the evacuation of Jewish children from Vienna to Britain in 1938. 'In Staßfurt itself, our relationship with our erstwhile friends got worse, at our football club, for example. We often came to blows with kids our age. Night-time disturbances in which someone would break our windows were not rare.' (p. 107).

The stones that flew through the windows of the 'School of Friendship' shattered more than the glass panes; they also shattered the GDR Kids' sense of belonging.

Lutz van Dijk documents the story of a young Namibian apprentice in *Von Skinheads keine Spur*. A dozen German youths attacked five Namibian apprentices in a discotheque and chased them to their apartment bloc, where a German neighbour betrayed their hiding place. The German youths forced the Namibians over the fourth floor balcony, leaving two of them seriously injured.

The children had grown accustomed to living in the spotlight, one which cast them in a positive light, as exotic performers, and as symbols of hope. As the

Staatssicherheitsdienst (state police of the GDR) was collapsing, Matongo and his fellows paradoxically found themselves in a harsh spotlight as segments of the public began to scrutinise them. They began to lose some of their party-based privileges and protections which were derived from the relationship of SWAPO with the SED ruling party, at the same time that ethnic Germans in Namibia were losing some of their race-based privileges and protections.

In November 1989, many dormant familial roots of the GDR Kids began to grow. 'Now suddenly an intensive correspondence between many of the kids and their parents and relatives in Africa began. How enviable it was when someone from our group got a letter from his parents.' (p. 104). Soon status was not measured in a traditional African manner, by which having a large number of relatives signalled status, but rather by the number of material possessions. This was an eerie reflection of the latent consumerism awakening in the GDR. The children's reactions were born of a desire for prestige, which was evident in the family photographs:

The relatives mostly had themselves photographed posed in front of a nice car, a luxurious house or building. This had the result of planting a false seed of hope in each of us. Stories made the rounds; everyone tried to convince the others that his parents were richer than those of the others. (p. 104)

The children became fixated on inanimate objects of accumulation; on consumer goods larger than the jeans or Walkmans which could be easily purchased after the fall of the Wall. They fixated on the cars and custom-built houses which were still seldom seen in the GDR. There was a desire for possessions which showed a disregard for the communist guidelines of only taking according to one's needs. The idea that Namibia was no longer a place of persecution, but rather a land where one could live well, was nurtured by the adult Namibians at Staßfurt:

Who swore up and down that we wouldn't need to worry about anything in Namibia. They must've been infected by liberation fever themselves, because they couldn't get enough of telling us that when, for example, someone was hungry in Namibia, he simply had to go into the forest and get the nice fruit off the trees. No one wore clothes because the weather was always warm there, etc. (p. 105)

Matongo summarises this conglomeration of benevolent climate, parents, and prosperity:

Although all of this was totally absurd, we fell in love with the thought so much that it possessed the same effect as a drug. It was like a rush to talk about going back to Namibia. To a free Namibia. To a Namibia where one knew no worries and no torment. To a Namibia where all of our parents would pick us up at the airport in a big car. It was just so great. (p. 105)

In the light of this view of Namibia, the GDR Kids did not like Germany so much anymore although they were surprised by the mass of goods which were coming in from the West and seemed modern and interesting.

Peer group conformity and personal appearance become central to the older children, leaving them particularly susceptible to consumerism despite – or perhaps precisely because of – their socialist upbringing.

Matongo and a friend began to steal the goods they wanted:

There was so much to see that temptation got to be too much for most of us. I and Indongo, a classmate, went out one day and got the idea that one shouldn't just look at new things, but should get them as well. We couldn't afford things. It began harmlessly with pinching sweets. Soon sweets became electronics. Our success was contagious. Soon almost every guy in our home was heavily involved in the business. (p. 107)

They did make the mistake of wearing the clothing which they had stolen, thereby incurring the mistrust of their caretakers. Matongo and his friends were identified as thieves and were punished by having to wear signs as such for a month.

The GDR Kids were also preparing to move from East Germany to Namibia, two very different places, yet united in their prematurely rising expectations of post-revolutionary economic plenty.

GEKIDNAPTE KINDER? RUMOURS AND REPATRIATION

In March 1990, German and Namibian national milestones featured prominently in international media. The political climate in Germany was not amenable to relics from the previous communist government of the old East Germany and it was hoped that the GDR Kids would be returned urgently to Namibia, although it was recognised that the children had been removed from the threat of South African bomb attacks. The DTA party,⁴⁴ accused SWAPO of kidnapping children from schools in Namibia near the Angolan border and sending them to East Germany for indoctrination. At the same time, reports were surfacing of the imprisonment of adult SWAPO members in Angola who were suspected of spying for South Africa. The National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), a non-governmental organisation which worked with a Parents' Committee, whose members had lost contact with their children while imprisoned in Angola, was to determine if any children had been sent to East Germany without the permission of their parents. Only one of the list of 25 missing children was found to be at the *Schule der Freundschaft*. Several parents of GDR Kids had indeed been accused of espionage, many of them without substantiation, but such falls from grace in the eyes of SWAPO had occurred years

⁴⁴ The party's full name, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, reflects that it developed from the various ethnic-based factions that met in Windhoek's old *Turnhalle* (gymnasium), which dated from German colonial times.

after their children had been sent to the GDR in what had, after all, been considered a privilege, not a punishment.

On 21 July 1990, the first Minister of Education in Namibia, Nahas Angula, who had for many years headed SWAPO's educational programs, met at the SWAPO headquarters in Windhoek with state and party officials, representatives of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Council of Churches in Namibia's Repatriation, Resettlement, and Reconstruction (CCN/RRR) Committee. Together they decided to reverse the agreement of 31 May, which had called for phased repatriation.

The children were formally told that they would be leaving in a mere two weeks' time. An air of unreality enveloped the *Schule der Freundschaft*. On the one hand 'a totally exaggerated euphoria built up that couldn't be held back'. (Kenna, 1999, pp. 104–106). On the other hand, as Lucia Engombe relates, 'Several kids thought we would only be on holiday in Namibia and would come back to Germany, so many of them left their things in Staßfurt'. (Kenna, 1999, p. 105)

The staff of the school escorted the children on buses to the airport in Frankfurt am Main.

The children's perceptions were challenged by what they observed during the few hours they spent in West Germany. They also continued to challenge the perceptions of others on distinctions between German-ness and blackness. In August 1990, whilst transferring between flights at Frankfurt Airport, political scientist Uwe Thaysen 'could not believe his eyes' when he saw a group of strangely German-seeming black children walking through the terminal. 'They just looked so orderly and tidy, like a class of Hamburg schoolchildren with their notebooks and so on' (personal communication at Georgetown University to Jason Owens in 1995). Their movements, their presence, and the way they held themselves was so German that they could have been from his hometown. Thaysen approached the group and asked in the clear, slow English one uses with strangers in international airports where they were from. The children stared at him. After trying French, the other 'African' language, Thaysen was amazed to hear them speaking in perfect German.

These refugees had clearly transgressed Thaysen's linguistic and cultural assumptions. This shock to outsiders would be greater when the children passed from Germany to Namibia.

The confusion that the GDR Kids caused in Namibia was second to the confusion which the GDR Kids experienced themselves in Namibia and is the subject of the following pages.

FROM NAMIBIA'S GERMANISED CENTRE TO THE FORMER 'OVAMBOLAND' AND BACK

Young black Namibians had left refugee camps in rural Angola in the 1970s and 1980s to fly towards an unknown land. In late August 1990, they were leaving that land, East Germany, which had become their home and were returning to

an unknown homeland where they would come to be called 'GDR Kids' or later 'Ex-GDR Kids'. They were repeating a ritual that they had gone through ten years before, a long day of goodbyes and bus trips preceding an overnight flight. These physically and emotionally draining activities left them so tired that despite their excitement, they fell asleep soon after the take-off of the aircraft. Nangula 'Rias' Hishoono writes of awakening as their jet began its descent towards the airport in Windhoek.

Anna, who sat next to me said 'It's not at all so beautifully green like in Germany; only sand, mountains, steppe' . . . Just like Anna I saw only sand, steppe and mountains wherever I looked to the horizon. It seemed it would be a hot day, because already at this early hour the sun was shining down on us mercilessly. Now I saw that I'd imagined Namibia very differently. Many children began to cry; I was one of them. (Kenna, 1999, p. 107)

In Germany, the GDR Kids had been raised with the idea that Namibia had a better, warmer, greener climate than Germany. They expected fruit falling from the trees and animals frolicking, not realising that the country had been named after a desert. They felt that they had been betrayed.

Their first impression of Windhoek on the way from the airport, was the wealthy suburb of Ludwigsdorf. They were, however, soon disillusioned when they arrived at the People's Primary School in Katutura, where they were to be accommodated until their parents came to fetch them.

Not all the children were immediately fetched by their families. Some well-off parents who were living in Windhoek and working for the new government fetched their children in fancy cars and took them to the kinds of dwellings of which the kids had dreamed and boasted in the months after independence.

As the Oshiwambo service of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation spread news of the children's arrival, poor relatives began to arrive from northern Namibia as well. Apart from photographing each child standing beside the relative who had come to collect them, the government could do little to ensure that the children would be traceable. The only requirement the government had was to ensure that they be integrated into their families. Few roads outside the largest towns in Namibia had names or numbered houses, and few black Namibians had post boxes, whilst the Namibian government was still establishing social services for the country's whole population. One of the GDR Kids, Annelie, described the environment at the People's Primary School and later at a training facility in Khomasdal, as 'total *unorganisiert*' and expressed her distress that they couldn't even say goodbye to one another after having lived together for 11 years in Germany where they had become a 'family'.

An East German official named Wutzke who had accompanied the children to Namibia, had promised several children that they could soon return to the GDR, if they so desired (Kenna, 1999, p. 88). Many of the children therefore believed that they should resist accepting any Namibian accommodation, so that their case for

returning to Germany would remain strong. Although officials at Peoples Primary School compelled children to go with their relatives, some children sneaked back to the school within days.

For many GDR Kids, it was not the sheer difference of Oshiwambo culture itself, but the manner in which they were confronted with it. Instead of being gradually integrated into Oshiwambo culture, they were abruptly dropped into it. Even those with some English and Oshiwambo language skills, had little to discuss with their relatives. One recurring shock for many of the children was the appearance of many mothers, who had been aged by war, poverty, or multiple childbearing, so different from their young East German caretakers.

OVAMBOLAND: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The publication in 1976 of the book, *Roots*, by Alex Haley and its adaption into a television mini-series led to a wave of research on family origins among all Americans. The book climaxes with Alex Haley's 'return' to his ancestral village in The Gambia, where he is welcomed when his family account matches that of the local keeper of oral history. Haley's family had been separated from Africa 20 times longer than were the GDR Kids, whose problematic homecoming was in stark contrast to the satisfaction which Haley felt.

Some GDR Kids who were collected by generally unfamiliar family members, encountered an environment which seemed even more foreign to them than the township in Windhoek. A five hour drive north of Windhoek lies the village of Oshivelo, (Oshiwambo for 'gate') beyond which is the northern region where more than half the Namibian population lives. Oshivelo had previously been a police border but became a border to control the agricultural lands from plant and livestock-borne diseases. The 'houses of sticks and straw' were a surprise to the children entering the area.

In Namibia, where the gap between rich and poor is extreme, problems of poverty or lack of economic development are easily confused with issues of race.

To live in northern Namibia was to live among more numerous people of modest means at the mercy of the climate. To live in central Namibia, was to live among a small community which spoke a world language such as English, or German. The life led by German-speakers in Namibia much more closely approximated the standards to which the children had grown accustomed in East Germany, and for these cultural and material reasons, many GDR Kids were attracted to the central area of Namibia.

UNFAMILIAR FAMILIES: RELATIVES WHO CANNOT RELATE

Three factors – the GDR Kids' lack of positive personal connections to black adults while in East Germany, the cultural assumptions they learned in Germany, and the great economic gap – left the GDR Kids disconnected from the majority of

their compatriots. In many ways, these black German speakers were in a position similar to that of white German speakers in Namibia. In Namibia, especially before South Africa quit the territory, blacks and whites generally lived parallel yet utterly heterogeneous lives.

In reading the accounts of the GDR Kids, it must be remembered that these children must have seemed at least as strange to their extended families as their families had seemed to them. Kenna quotes a frustrated mother exclaiming, 'Those German kids don't understand us' (Kenna, 1999, p. 50). Kenna notes her own surprise that the woman uses the adjective 'German' to describe these children. That a child's own mother could use such distancing adjectives as 'those' and 'German' is even greater evidence of mutual frustration than is Kenna's observation that the woman is wringing her hands. At least this mother could converse to some extent with her child in the common medium of English. The GDR Kids often did not find acceptance among the more traditional Aawambo, in whose eyes they seemed self-important and discourteous.

From the perspectives of the German media and the German speakers of Namibia, the GDR Kids were uniquely interesting representatives of a post independent Namibia. To the Namibian families in northern Namibia, where every family had seen members leaving to fight or be educated outside Namibia, the GDR Kids were not noteworthy. Many families did not consider these returnees from Germany as worthy of special treatment that could easily lead to tension in the family. Within the family, the child was not a representative of German culture, an elite party cadre in training, or an intercultural ambassador, but simply the fourth-oldest daughter, or son who was expected to behave accordingly. Even the presence of a German-funded mattress intended for a GDR Kid could cause dissension between the newly returned family member and the other siblings.

A profile of the GDR Kids in the German travel serial *Merian* echoes these sentiments: 'Grandfather and Uncle are so authoritarian. Disobedience is likely the only thing that we learned in Germany, according to them. They don't understand us.' (1997, p. 78). The Hamburg publication does not problematise the irony that these children stand accused of having learned disobedience under one of the most intolerant regimes, in the no-longer-extant police state whose name they now bear.

The economic gap compounded the generation gap and the cultural gap between the children and most other black Namibians. Immanuel Dumeni, director of the Council of Churches in Namibia's Repatriation, Resettlement, Reconstruction (CCN/RRR) Committee, states that some of these groups were prepared to help the GDR children financially with their studies. He, however, deplored the preferential treatment that some children were given, as it divided the children. An involved social worker pointed out the problem of a child arriving at a family homestead with a mattress, several changes of clothing and school supplies where everyone slept on straw. It was clear that no consideration had been given to the Oshiwambo culture and the Namibian economy. A large number of GDR Kids sought guidance from various faiths, including the Bahá'í religion which celebrates international unity.

OUTPOSTS OF A FOREIGN CULTURE IN NAMIBIA'S RURAL NORTH

In 1991, the GDR no longer existed, and no GDR Kids remained in Europe. They had seen a number of changes, the most important being that the socialist world had adopted capitalism. They had landed in a desert homeland were whisked past the houses of the wealthy, and were placed in a township, before being taken to rural homesteads which seemed impossibly basic to many of them. The proximity of some of their former classmates, who stayed in families nearby, let the children feel less lonely, but at the same time, with fewer incentives to open themselves up to interactions with others around them.

MATONGO'S YEARS AFTER THE GDR

Matongo attended the former *Deutsch Oberschule* Swakopmund as one of the first blacks to do so. He had great problems with the racist attitudes of some of the students and administrators, as well as with English which had been introduced in all schools in Namibia to prepare students for examinations and careers in a Namibia which had adopted English as the official language.

Matongo's autobiography ends with his thanks to several Germans and German Namibians who had helped him in his high school years in Namibia. After completing his general education in 1996, Matongo became interested in studying music. In 1997, a woman from Germany who was staying at the Hansa Hotel in Swakopmund admired his piano skills and began conversing with him. She secured an audition for him at a music school in western Germany and financed his air journey there. Although he was not admitted to the school, Matongo was given a large sum of money to be financially secure. After a few months in Namibia in early 1998, Matongo is said to have visited friends in Cape Town. When he was not seen again, many who cared about him put missing person announcements in newspapers in Swakopmund and Windhoek. The efforts of friends and relatives to find him have not yet resulted in contact with him in the intervening years. It is hoped that the publication of this book will not only spread his story, as was his wish, but also lead to our learning about his destiny.

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6

Otjiherero literature in transition from the oral to the written word

Alfeus Tjijoro

INTRODUCTION

In order to review Otjiherero literature, it is necessary to explicate the formation of this ethnic group and its position in Namibia. The Ovaherero are a group of three related peoples who are brought together by language, religion, culture and history. These people are the Ovaherero, Ovambanderu and Ovahimba. The Ovaherero are a preliterate society, and it is therefore difficult to come to a definite chronology of events leading to their current state. Most of what is said about them will be conjecture and a refashioning by different generations of folklorists, rather than reports based on hard facts of empirical history.

The Ovaherero are part of the large Bantu people and trace their origin to the great lakes region of Africa. Most of what will be written here, reflects the general myths and legends shared by all the Ovaherero. Their myths and legends give tribute to a land which was blessed with lush vegetation and the presence of reeds. In Otjiherero, you will hear talk of *Kehi ra Ruu kehi jokuvare* (literally translated: In the land of reeds under the sea). It is significant to remark that *Ruu*, meaning reed, is given a mythical name as the one which is normally associated with a god or a deity. The great lakes region encompasses countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda, to mention but a few. There are two mythical characters which are worth mentioning at this juncture, namely Kaundja wa Nawiho and Kahozu ka Mbuti.

According to traditional folklore Kaundja wa Nawiho engineered the great trek of the Ovaherero people from the earlier region to the present day Namibia. This trek lasted at least a hundred years, starting from around 1340 to about 1441. They are said to have traversed various climes and lands in search of good vegetation for their prized possession, cattle. Kahozu ka Mbuti is the person singled out in all Ovaherero myths as the first person to tame and possess cattle in the mythical past. Cattle have a central place in the lives of the Ovaherero, as they are the links which connect an Omuherero with his ancestors.

This chapter will look at the literature and advance a working definition of literature which in the view of the author, should give preference to orature, as a necessary component of literature, especially when viewed from the perspective of the particular people whose culture is embedded in a predominantly oral mode of transfer. The chapter will take a cursory glance at the oral literary landscape and sketch the purpose, use and performance of oral literature and its formative impact on both the Ovaherero people as well as how it influenced the literary landscape of the few authors whose books I will briefly review towards the end of the chapter. Orature is important in the lives of the Ovaherero as it has sustained them over millennia and has educated, entertained and created a platform for the engagement of the spirit world which is at the heart of their religion.

In a community where religion, culture, politics, history and geography are inseparable, it goes without saying that orature will inevitably mix and comele all these fields, which, in the eyes of the ancestors, have been the branches of the same tree of knowledge about the natural and spirit worlds. The oral tradition is manifestly evident in the works of many Ovaherero literary figures who have manipulated and reshaped the original materials as traditional storytellers have done from time immemorial, whilst at the same time, remaining as close as possible to the original epic or ballad.

The first Ovaherero people to be taught to read and write were taught by a lady called Johanna Kauaendeke who was converted in 1860 by Hugo Hahn⁴⁵ the first German missionary who also established the Augustineum seminary. At the turn of the century, the Ovaherero-German War broke out and the little which was being done by the seminary came to an abrupt standstill. After the war, the German government did not intensify the teaching of the Ovaherero because of the racial prejudice and the enmity which had developed between the two peoples. Then too, when apartheid was introduced in 1948, another retrogressive step was ushered in with regard to the proper teaching of the vernaculars. It was only in the 1980s, when Professor Rahmund Ohly from Poland started to work at the Academy of Tertiary Education in Windhoek, that an interest in Otjiherero was revived.

Ohly worked on the orthography of the language and recruited his first students. Jekura Uaurika Kavari, currently the head of the University of Namibia's Language and Literature Studies Department, was among the first students to be enrolled. It is therefore clear from the foregoing section that Otjiherero has had a relatively

⁴⁵ For a more detailed discussion see Chapter 2 in this volume.

short history as a written language. Most of the works produced, are 'retellings' of well-established novels in other languages, notably Afrikaans and English, as well as the oral literature which has included the traditional Otjiherero praise songs of the natural world as well as bedtime fables and other legends. The book *Ondjombo yovimbaharere* (Kavari, 1997) is such a prime example. Other genres, including novels, poetry and drama, will be clarified later.

DEFINING OTJIHERERO LITERATURE IN LIGHT OF ITS ORAL BACKGROUND

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines literature as '...a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and *the perceived aesthetic excellence* (my emphasis) of their execution' (Rexroth, 2007). The Encyclopedia also quotes *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* which considers literature to be '... writings having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of *permanent or universal interest*' (own emphasis).

Leif Lorentzon (2007) in his incisive and well-argued essay entitled, *Is African Oral Literature Literature?* argues that the various songs, ballads and epic poetry from many regions of Africa, but principally from Mali and Nigeria, form a part of literature. He concurs with the encyclopedia entry above that literature refers to the letter of the alphabet and was therefore associated with the written word. Previously, there had been no value judgement of what had been written. It was only during the late 18th Century, under the influence of the age of reason and because people wanted a water tight definition in every human endeavour, that literature, or imaginative writing as it was then named, became established as 'literature without utility; a literature where the presentational discourse dominates over the informational and directive discourses' (Lorentzon, 2007, p. 2). This was truly art for 'art's sake' as the Russian Formalists would later on declare. Lorentzon also laments the lack of the word 'literature' in the many books published by Europeans for centuries on African artistic creations, naming only a few exceptions. The only book which he mentions was Ruth Finnegan's *Oral Literature in Africa* which chartered a new course and acknowledged African folklore as literature. Lorentzon regards African oral literature as literature because of its purposefulness, the predominance of the 'informational' and 'directional discourse' which dominates over the oral 'presentational' form. One good point about Finnegan's book is its ability to distinguish those salient points in an orally transmitted utterance which made an utterance a verbal art and others not. According to Lorentzon, J. H. Nketia had published a book on funeral dirges of the Akan fifteen years earlier and he came to the conclusion that they were indeed literary expressions. This was true because they used 'stylistic devices and the fact that a woman may rely on the tradition provided, rather than on her own creativeness; there is ready repertoire for her to make use of, as she recites. ...' (2007, p. 4).

Apart from the fact that oral literature is concerned with themes of war, love, praise, criticism and death, it also conforms to the Western criteria of addressing

the following: it gives knowledge, it expresses emotions and it arouses emotions of empathy or sympathy in the reader or listener. The noted analysis of African literature is therefore, perfectly suited to the analysis of all types of Otjiherero literature, especially as this relates to the stylistic devices of the performances of funeral dirges or the other praising and lamenting songs of the Ovaherero. This ability to stick to a particular convention, does not apply to funeral dirges alone, but to other literary types such as fables or allegorical tales.

Lorentzon (2007) also regards African oral literature as literature because of its 'quotability'. He suggests that even if the particular song or tale is sung or narrated by a poor performer, the audience will be able to get to the core of the song and quote it for future usage. It is, therefore, not important to distinguish between the performer and the content of what he/she performs. The content is then said to have an existence in a time and place independent of the performer or reciter. This is indeed true of the various forms of the Ovaherero oral literature where ballads about the bravery of certain people and the various battles fought by our forefathers, are rendered in songs termed *omihiva* (by men) and *outjina* (by women) in a variety of ways, each one being different from the ones performed by the other dancers or reciters.

The final contribution on oral literature as a genuine form of art comes from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the well-known author, who has stopped writing in English and has tapped the hitherto unknown oral literary heritage of his Gikuyu people. He has written a short article *Notes Towards a Performance Theory of Orature* (Wa Thiong'o, 2007), where he explains his view-point. He starts with the crucial point of mentioning Pio Zirimu, who had coined the term 'orature' and although he acknowledges the paucity of research into what orature truly is, he has a few salient points to make. The first point Wa Thiong'o makes is the wrong perception, in his view, that the arts communicated orally and received aurally are inferior or of a lower rung in the linear development of literature. This, according to him, is wrong, as orature is the use of utterance as an aesthetic means of expressing novel human emotions with the main purpose of entertaining, reminding the listener of particular cultural events as well as historical practices and calling them to action.

The second important point he makes and which is very true in the case of the Otjiherero literature, is the oneness of the created universe. Wa Thiong'o (2007) says:

Humans are definitely part of nature. In that sense they are not different from animals and plants that all depend on the same environment for earth, air water and sun. They are products of the same mother – environment. Orature takes that for granted. Hence in the narrative of Orature humans, birds, animals and plants interact freely, they often assume each other's forms, including language. What is often arrested in writing is a particular version, a particular rendering. ... Nature, then in orature manifests itself as a web of connections of mutual dependence. (p. 2)

Wa Thiong'o thereafter refers to the Homeric epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, as having firm roots in oral literature. He makes an interesting comment about the two epics namely, that even if they are inscribed, they are realisable only in oration. Nurture has what he terms a 'mimetic' relationship to nature. This, in essence, means that the young are educated to imitate the survival instincts of the various natural creatures and nature in its renewal, birth and death of the seasons or the animals which abound in it.

In orature, one is not just educated to be one with nature, but to despise the bad and strive to do good, or as he so aptly puts it: 'Godhood is treated as the ideal spiritual expression of nature and nurture' (Wa Thiong'o, 2007, p. 3). He further differentiates between the various forms of orature which are riddles, songs, proverbs, stories, drama and dance, which match his own view, and are humanity's imaginative attempts to explain the universe. This is so true of the Otjiherero oral literature. Wa Thiong'o describes proverbs as a code of wisdom which the different members of society use when similar situations present themselves later and which are codified through pithy sayings. Finally, Wa Thiong'o discusses the significance of storytelling in all cultures. I will quote him at length to emphasise the significance of storytelling, not just in his particular culture, but in the Otjiherero culture as well.

The story has its origins in human confrontation with time. Nobody knows what will happen in the next hour, the next day, the next week, the next month, the next year, or in the years to come, in short, in the future. The biggest unknown is what will happen after death. In a story, as opposed to real life, one can know what happens next. A good story teller is the one who raises anew the anxiety of expectation. From the tongue of a master story teller, even when his or her listeners already know the general outline of the story and the ending, he or she is still able to recreate afresh, in the listener, the anxiety of expectation and then satisfy it. The story becomes new in every telling and retelling (2007, p. 4).

The final component of orature, according to Wa Thiong'o, is dance, which he describes as a 'celebration of freedom from fixity, a momentary triumph over gravitational pull' (2007, p. 32). He also sees dance as a symbolic victory over gravity. Finally, dance is part of our working life, because we move when we are alive and cease this movement when we are dead.

EXPLORATION OF CERTAIN THEMES BY SELECT AUTHORS

In this section, I will explore the themes of novels, drama and poetry by some authors whose works are listed below. I shall try to highlight the themes of some novels, an anthology of traditional Ovaherero folktales/fables, two plays and an anthology of poems.

Meundju Tjingaete's (1994) *Ouje Otjivingurura* is about the unpredictability of the future, despite our best attempts at securing a better future. Tjingaete seems to subscribe to the notion that 'man proposes but God disposes'. This is clear from the main character who thought of a better future for himself and his dependents

but who realised belatedly that one should not cry over spilt milk. Another novel which needs no introduction is a rendition of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (published in Otjiherero in 2002 as *Okambiri kondenya* but now out of print).

The next book to be considered is Nathanael Kaunomuino Mbaeva's (2007) *Ondjimbi ye ku kwambera ko*. The main theme of the book seems to be the maltreatment and marginalisation of women and a plea for their emancipation. It also grapples with the issue of polygamy which, in the author's view, appears to be tantamount to relegating women to second class citizenship. The book also tackles the difference between appearance and reality as Mbindee, the husband, accuses Tjivingurura of being barren, whereas he is the infertile one. There is a rift in his perception as he praises and extols Suvée as clean, pious and blemish-less, whereas she is, in actual fact, HIV positive and will cause the demise of both Tjivingurura and Mbindee.

Karuja Maharero's (2011) *Owatjiri eharwi koutoni* is a heart-rending story about the human being's resilience despite all the odds stacked against them. It is an engaging book about the invincible innate qualities of people, despite their perceived inferior socio-economic and historical backgrounds. The narrative shows that every cloud has a silver lining and that success is independent from some of the obstacles which society has put in the path of those with less illustrious backgrounds.

The next novel is A.V. Muniazo's (2003) *Oupe ngwa tura ondjo?* a social commentary despising traditional customs, when pregnant mothers are married to the men who did not impregnate them, and who in turn are compelled by custom to take full responsibility for the child of another man.

I will now turn to Mbaeva's (2006) novel *Omburi omuze woundu*. This futuristic novel wants us to abandon unscientific preconceived ideas about what makes us truly human. The aim of the book is to take such fallacies with a grain of salt or totally shed them from our collective consciousness. Advances in science including brain surgery, are touted as the best thing since sliced bread, and everyone should enjoy the benefits of both worlds, namely, both the traditional and the modern worlds.

The next two books the themes of which will be explored, are Muniazo's (2005) *Ouherero nouye wanambano* and Mbaeva's (2006) *Eraka Oraupe?*. The former seems to revolve around the sticky issue of the generational gap and the associated tensions engendered by the people from different age groups. It is about the things which the old people hold dear, as opposed to what the young consider worthy of pursuing. When one relates this to the Ovaherero culture, the message which spreads from this drama, is that some traditional customs and norms are irrelevant to modern societies and that the continuation thereof, is tantamount to self-destruction. *Eraka Oraupe?* further elaborates on this topic of the modern versus the traditional where they relate to inheritance.

Ondjombo yovimbaharere by Kavari (1997) consists of trickster tales, fables, and fairy tales. In the case of the trickster tales, the protagonist is usually clever and devious. He causes problems for other characters and usually goes unpunished, even though in the story between the fox and the hyena, the fox loses his mother. Fables

are stories which teach a lesson or have a moral lesson. Here we have numerous animals with human characteristics and the themes revolve around cooperation or the lack thereof. In one story, we have the elephant who has quarrelled with the heavens and through his pride has led to the suffering of all other animals when they experience a terrible thirst because of the lack of rain.

Finally, the book also details various fairy tales and *Mbazuwa wa Mbinge* is such an example. Fairy tales normally have a hero or heroine and there is a conflict which is caused by jealousy. In the case of *Mbazuwa wa Mbinge*, we have the story of a beautiful damsel who was admired by everyone. All the other girls were, however, not happy with the adoration accorded to her by all and sundry and schemed to get rid of her. When they went to the well to fetch water, they threw her into the well and went home. Kindness and goodness, however, triumphed over evil when old women, who went to collect wild fruits nearby, heard her pleading voice and rescued her.

The following is a short description of the plot of the various novels, drama and poetry the themes of which I have explored above. Some will be considered in greater detail while others will be examined in passing only. The first book to be explored is Tjingaetse's (1994) *Ouje Otjivvingurura* which literally translated means 'the world is not fixed, but is constantly changing'. It is a story of intrigue, suspicion and jealousy, which results from the fact that the main character, Kakongoro (Hijangatu) is turning over a new leaf by migrating to another area, in this case the Epukiro, from his previous settlement, with all his cattle.

Another novel *Owatjiri eharwi koutoni*, Maharero's (2011) debut novel, is set in the communal area of Gam, where the Ovaherero who fled from the German extermination order of the notorious Lothar Von Trotha of Germany at the turn of the century, were resettled upon their repatriation from Botswana. It adds new insights into the Otjherero literature, as it includes dialectical variations within the Otjherero language. The novel centres on Vetuimbirahi who was raised by his elderly father, Kakurumehi, an arch traditionalist who was convinced that his son would benefit from a sound education. Vetuimbirahi has experienced rejection from his peers because of his poor socio-economic background and has often been bullied and regarded as academically inferior. None of this distracts him because he works hard and pursues his education with vigour and determination. He realises that in order for one to succeed in life, one needs to be realistic and not pretentious. This becomes his abiding philosophy throughout the novel and he eventually succeeds by passing his secondary school with flying colours, which in turn earns him a scholarship to study veterinary science at a prestigious university in Germany.

Muniazio's (2003) novel *Oupe ngwa tura ondjo*? is about the life and tribulations of Mbeimuna, whose mother marries a man who is not his biological father while she is pregnant with him. This came about because Mbeimuna's biological father, Katuvei, refused to accept responsibility for the pregnancy. Kaurumbua, who was in love with Mbeimuna's mother, Vejamua, approached her with the option that he would take the whole package (mother and baby). Mbeimuna's early childhood is a

blessed one with his parents. When Mbeimuna goes to secondary school, however, misfortune sets in. His biological father is a teacher at this secondary school and is set to make his life at school a living hell, despite the fact that Mbeimuna was a brilliant boy who excelled in sports and learning. The teacher becomes an abuser who starts to ill-treat Mbeimuna (and his mother). Amidst all this abuse, Mbeimuna sees that even though his mother was willing to rescue him from the abuser, there was nothing she could do in her powerlessness. In her weak state finally, Vejamua reveals to Mbeimuna that Katuvei is his real father and tells him the whole story, adding that she is the one to be blamed. Mbeimuna's response to his mother indicates that he does not blame her, but rather the Ovaherero custom.

Ondjimbi ye ku kwambera ko (Mbaeva, 2007) is a novel which deals with the life and tribulations of Tjivingurura, an orphan who is raised by her grandmother and is later married traditionally to a wealthy business executive named Mbindee. Mbindee married Tjivingurura to take good care of his plentiful livestock, cattle and goats, at a place called Otjijandjeua where Tjivingurura stays with her mother-in-law. After four years of marriage, Tjivingurura and Mbindee do not have children and, on the rare occasions that Mbindee comes to Otjijandjeua, he accuses her of being barren and snubs her when she wants to hug him. He also falsely accuses her of being illiterate. Tjivingurura has in the meantime attended evening classes at the mission school and manages to pass her Grade 12 with flying colours. With her Grade 12 diploma, she decides to surprise her husband by paying him a visit in the city. Mbindee sends her to the streets where Tjivingurura is offered accommodation by two drug dealers, one of whom rapes her. At night an owl appears to her with the following message: 'Be an example of the mistreatment committed against women and be an example of the awakening of women' (Mbaeva, 2007, p. 58). It is these words which lead Tjivingurura to struggle for her emancipation. Mbindee denied that he was married to Tjivingurura, but Tjivingurura challenges the mighty traditional authority which took a decision that in the case of a divorce Mbindee would pay her with six heads of cattle. It later emerges that contrary to the popular belief which propounded the myth that only women can be barren, men could also be barren. Mbindee is the one who is infertile and this revelation comes as a shock to his mother, who has a stroke which paralyses her completely.

Omburi omuze woundu (Mbaeva, 2006) is a futuristic novel about a brain transplant. In this fictitious novel, the author explores how different sectors of the Ovaherero traditional community would perceive such a transplant. The novel opens with an accident scene in which a young lady, Nguvei, is struck on the head by an object from a truck which has left her brain-dead. On the other side, a heated argument erupts between a married couple over the fact that they could not conceive any children. The wife storms out of the room and attempts to commit suicide by jumping from a tall building. She damages her body and is admitted to hospital where two doctors conceive the idea of a brain transplant. The conservative hard-core traditionalists, as represented by Hijaukunga the father of Nguvei, into whose body the brain will be transplanted, view this as an abomination and make

all attempts to prevent it. The Christians as represented by Kavirindi, whose wife's brain would be transplanted into Nguvei's body, are initially uncomfortable with the transplant but later agree to it. To them, God gives wisdom to man and if the operation is successful then it means it carries the blessings of God. The sorcerer, as represented by Kariamapia, father-in-law of Nguvei, believes that his magician, Kamukovauongue, has done a good job as he had sent this misfortune to his son whom he expected to commit suicide as he could not handle the situation. This would enable him to inherit everything from his son in the absence of any other family members. As regards the transplant, he was indifferent to its possible success. All he was interested in, was the fact that Nguvei should never wake up again.

Ouherero nouye wanambano (Muniaz, 2005) is a drama about the experiences of the protagonist Vetaapi with the traditional Ovaherero norms and customs, having grown up with a Western oriented education that has subscribed to him different norms and etiquette. Vetaapi was raised by his grandparents in a typical Ovaherero rural set-up with its accompanying norms and customs while his parents worked in the city. He believes, for example, that the ancestors had lived their own lives and had died, and that there was no point in which they could dictate to the living on what to do. With his parents, Vetaapi clashed particularly over their *otukwise* (the clapping of hands) church which, according to Vetaapi, was deceptive. His disrespect of the feared spirits of the ancestors bring conflict between him and his grandparents. When he grows up Vetaapi also refuses to accept his grandfather's choice of a wife.

The drama, *Eraka Oraune?* (Mbaeva, 2006), is set in a typical traditional Ovaherero household which consists of extended family members. The main character in this play is Eraka, one of the family members, whose thoughts and actions are revealed to the reader only at the end of the drama. Eraka had bewitched Hijakondjombo, who is the head of the household although not the most senior member of the family, with the hope of inheriting his possessions. It transpires that Hijakondjombo is not the sole owner of all the property which was owned by this household, such as the Ovaherero cattle which, for example, could be divided by two, the holy cattle from the father's side and the other cattle from the mother's side.

The present scenario wherein a senior member of a family inherits property according to the traditional customs and norms, and then relegates these to modern practices, wherein the family is perceived to be nuclear, is exposed as wrong. Hijakondjombo knew this, and that is why he distributed the property to the rightful owners. Eraka, on the contrary, in his greed and with a Western education, believes otherwise.

The next book to be reviewed, Kavari's (1997) *Ondjombo yovimbaharere*, is a complete collection of fables which all Ovaherero children grow up with from a very early age. These are usually told to the young ones and have three distinct roles to play, namely to educate, entertain and warn of unbecoming behaviour to the normal functioning of a well-trained person. There are many stories about the hyena and the fox who were very good friends. One day the fox realised that their mothers were taking too much of the food of their hunt. So he suggested to the

hyena that each one should go and kill their mother. Hyena did as he was ordered while the fox went and hid his mother in a den. After every hunt he would sneak away from his friend and take food to his mother. The hyena observed the fox's behaviour for some time and decided to follow him from a distance. The fox did as he had always done and at the entrance to the den he spoke in coded language to his mother. The latter came out and took the piece of meat. The next day it was the hyena, who quickly ran to the den, before the fox could, and he spoke the same coded language to the mother of his friend and she came out. The hyena killed the mother of the fox and returned to the fire.

POETRY

We will now consider a poetry anthology with a number of excellent poems written by some of the best Otjiherero poets. The anthology is fittingly entitled *Otjihimangongo* (Mukonge, 2008) which means a wonderful or miraculous occurrence. There are many poems about the natural phenomena like the beautiful landscapes, rivers and mountain ranges such as the famous Waterberg Mountain near Okakarara and poems on animals and how they are praised in Otjiherero. There are half a dozen poems on cattle which fittingly demonstrate the inseparable bond which exists between an Omuherero and his cattle. There are also poems on other animals, like the ant, the fox, the hyena, the horse, etc. There are also poems expressing the poets' feelings on war, love, death and truth. All these poems are aesthetically sound, but I have selected two for my purpose. Those poems were randomly selected and are in no way a value judgement on the others. The only criterion used was probably the ease of translation as some of the praise poems are notoriously difficult to translate into English. The two poems I have selected are Mbasuva's *Ousemba* (Rights) and Katjariua's *Ongumbiro yomitiri* (a teacher's prayer). The former grapples with a topical issue which in most cases is not well understood and has the potential of causing misunderstanding and strife among family members, which is the issue of rights. The second poem is a straightforward prayer by a teacher to be guided by the Almighty in his/her daily career.

Ousemba

Omukazendu matja: "ami mbi nawo"

Omuatje matja: "ami mbi nawo"

Omurumendu matja: "ami mba kwatwa nawo"

Hapo owani ngu na wo

Omukazendu matja: "Mbi ungura

Mbi yenda komuhuka

Ombwiko yonganda ozombamba

Mbi tumba onganda"

Omuatje matja: "Mbi nousemba

Mbina tate

Mbina Mama
Mbiso ku hupisiwa
Omurumendu matja: "Owami ondwezu
Yotjunda tjayo
Mbino masa
Mbi risa nawa
Uripi Owatjiri
Handjaura muhandjaure (Mbasuva, 2008, p. 84)

Rights

The woman says: "I have it"
 The child says: "I have it"
 The man says: "I was born with it"
 Who really has it?
 The woman says: "I am employed
 I go to the east
 I contribute equally to the sustenance of the family
 I sustain the household"
 The child says: "I have rights
 I have a father
 I have a mother
 I need to be cared for"
 The man says: "I am a bull
 With his own kraal
 I am powerful
 I sustain my family carefully."
 Where is the truth
 Interpreter do us the honour and interpret faithfully

Ongumbiro yomiṭiri

Motjiungura tjaandje
Aruhe me tara kove
Mukuru omunamasa ayehe
Mbi mune omasa mokutjiungura
Mbi kare noupore
Mbi kare nouretima
Tjimeungura noundu ouṭiṭi
Oundu ouhinandjo mbwa yandjwa ku ami
Ndjipa orusuvero noukozu
Ndjipa kutja mbi rire otjipaturure tjomeho
Ndjipa okurira omuke wondjira yomawatjiri
Kutja aruhe kondjandero mbi yandje omaziriro
Aruhe ngu maye tja tjiri aruhe mbi rora pu me yenene

Otja komasa nomasorero wandje
Nu aruhe ondangu ondengero nohivirikiro
Ngarire oyoye Mukuru wandje.
Amen (Katjariua, 2008, p. 36)

The teacher's prayer

I am looking up to you
In my daily occupation
God Almighty
Grant the power to perform to the best of my ability
Grant a humble disposition
Give me patience
So that when I am working with young people
Innocent young people given to me.
Give me love and humility
Grant me the key to open their eyes
Give me the ability to carve a road of truthfulness
Grant me the ability to always give appropriate answers
Answers that will testify to my willingness to try my best
To the best of my abilities
May the gratitude the praise and respect
Be yours my Dear Lord
Amen

CONCLUSION

Finally, although Otjiherero poetry is written by people who share a common Namibian identity, it is also true that an inherently Otjiherero oral influence is clearly visible. Another issue which is unmistakably true of the Otjiherero novels, is the preponderance of the use of a third person narrator in almost all the novels written by the Ovaherero writers. This is especially crucial because the oral literature had a very strong narrative component and the agency of the various characters was left in the hands of the capable narrator, hence the dominance of this mode of narration.

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7

Gender stereotypes in Oshiwambo orature

Petrus Mbenzi

INTRODUCTION

The Oshiwambo orature consists of various genres such as folktales, myths, legends, fables and proverbs. These genres perform various functions in the life of the Aawambo. Some of the functions are entertainment and education. The orature is mainly used for transmitting traditional norms and values from generation to generation. Through the orature, the norms and values are inculcated in the children. The orature thus provides information to children on how to behave in the society according to their sex. Boys are advised to act as men, and girls are likewise advised to behave as women. According to Nanguti (M. Nanguti, personal communication, July 11, 2011), the roles based on gender in the Oshiwambo tradition, are stressed in oral literature. Such roles are strictly adhered to because the oral literature is regarded as a conduit through which good norms and values are propagated. Both males and females are depicted differently in the orature.

Big and small animals are also depicted in different ways in the various folktales and fables. The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to identify and present information on the gender stereotypical issues in the Oshiwambo orature and to reveal the effects of gender stereotypes on the life of the Aawambo. The information is investigated at the phraseological, morphological, and proverbial levels. The chapter hinges on gender schema theory to explain gender stereotypes in Oshiwambo orature because it explains 'how individuals become gendered in society and how sex-linked characteristics are maintained and transmitted to the other members of a culture' (Bem, 1981, p. 354).

STEREOTYPICAL ISSUES IN OSHIWAMBO FOLKTALES

Tirronen and Nakumbwata (1969) provide three folktales, namely *Kahwela*, *Amukokokotambahu*, and *Amutetiithimoontene*, each named after the main male character of the story. In these folktales, the three main characters are all depicted as gluttons. *Kahwela* had developed an excessive desire for food during times of hunger and had begun stealing millet from the house. He went to soak it in the pot which he kept in the cave. He pulled tricks on his wife by pretending that he was going to help with the sick cow of his neighbour, but instead he always went to the cave and ate. Finally, his wife became suspicious. On one occasion, she followed her husband and found him helping himself to the soaked millet. He then assaulted his wife because of the embarrassment of having been discovered.

Amutetiithimoontene used to remove a portion of the porridge prepared for the children and his wife and add it to the porridge which had been prepared for him, because he wanted a 'big' porridge for himself. He always ordered his wife to go and close the entrance of the house while he removed a portion of porridge from that of his wife and children which revealed his greed.

Amukokotambahu was also greedy and his wife tried as much as possible to find food for him. She collected locusts for him which he pretended to dislike but he used to sneak out of the house to go and help himself to the locusts on the threshing floor where they had been scattered to dry. His wife found out that there was something strange. She followed the husband and found him eating the locusts. He then assaulted his wife because he was angry at having been discovered.

In these folktales a man is portrayed as a glutton and as an aggressive husband. Traditionally, Aawambo men are given more food than women. Such a belief seems to have been inferred from the traditional stories in which men eat a lot. A woman who is married, is advised by her maternal relatives to feed her husband well. It is also believed that men assault their wives if they do not provide them with enough food. Women are depicted in these stories as wise characters because they discover the trickery of their husbands.

Apart from the folktales, there are also traditional poems which confirm that men are stereotyped as gluttons. This confirmation is evident in the following poems:

Omulumentu a fuka
Melilo ekodholo
Metiti ekulumuna
Ta li iithima ta lili
Ta li iilya ta z' omahodhi
Amupunduka niithima
Ta g' ongali noshikwiila

A greedy man
 In the woven palm plate he makes holes

In the wooden plate he makes scratches
He eats porridge while crying
He eats millet while shedding tears
He stumbles over while carrying the porridge
He falls on his back while carrying the *oshikwiila*. (Negumbo, 1996, p. 43)

In this poem a man is depicted as a glutton. The scratches in the plate indicate that men do not leave any food on the plate. He becomes very disappointed if there is insufficient food for him. Thus he cries when he eats. Another poem with a similar theme is:

Okwenye

Ethimbo nena lya ti ko
Lyepupyu lya f' iihuna
Oshoka omvula kayi ko
Tu tameke okukuna
Moomwedhi ndho dhokwenye
Omomethimbo lyuupyu
Mok' oomeme ya hala
Ya kal' owala ya lala
Aasamane ya hala wo
Oomwiha dhi ninge mbali
Oshok' oondjenda dhetango
Kadhi ivule nodha thimbi

Dry season

Time has dawned
Of bad perspiration
Because there is no rain
For us to start planting.
In those dry months
It is a hot period
During which the mothers
Want to idle
The husbands also want
Two lunches to be served
Because the son travels
Like a chameleon. (Namuhuja, 1997, p. 22)

In this poem a man is portrayed as a greedy character. He wants to be served with two lunches because the day has become too long for him. He is therefore, unable to wait for supper without being served another full meal.

In their collection of folktales, Viljoen and Amakali (1974) have two folktales which reflect gender stereotypes. In the folktale *Iimbunda yuuwa*, it is told that a certain man tricked his wife into preparing *oshimbunda* (porridge made out of milk and mahangu flour) for him. He told his wife that the king had instructed him to take the *oshimbunda* to the palace. The wife complied and prepared the *oshimbunda*. The husband never took the *oshimbunda* to the palace but always sat under the tree and ate it himself. Every time he returned home he told his wife how pleased the king was with *oshimbunda* and told her that the king had demanded it once again. The wife became suspicious and followed the husband on one occasion. She found him asleep under the tree after eating the *oshimbunda* and whipped him.

Viljoen and Amakali (1974) give another folktale called *Amunyela ya ny' oshuunduthima*. In this story a certain man used to trick his wife by leaving her in the field while he went to take the cattle for grazing but he always cooked porridge for himself and put the porridge in his hat so that his wife would not recognize what was cooking. On one occasion, his wife realized that there was something suspicious and stood in the entrance to the hut. She refused to give way to the husband. The husband pushed her. Unfortunately, the hat fell off his head and the porridge fell out.

In both folktales men appear to have an excessive desire for food. They are portrayed as cunning and are seen as unsuccessful tricksters whose tricks backfire since they are always caught out by their wives.

Women are portrayed as weak people. Such powerlessness is also stressed in the poem given below:

Aana yaNamibia

Yana yaNamibia

Pulakeneni nawa

Omwa nik' onkulukadhi

Ne mwaa sh' aakulukadhi

Yoomeme tulii po

Ne mu thikame kumwe

Uumbanda tulii po

Opo mu kondje kumwe

Kutheni ayihe mbyo

Ya nik' oshilumentu

Muye nayo mondambo

Mo mu na aalumentu (Namuhuja, 1997, p. 65)

You children of Namibia

Listen carefully

You behave as women

Yet you are not women

Drop all womanish behaviours

And unite

Drop cowardice
 And fight alongside one another
 Take everything which is manly
 And go to the battlefield
 Where there are men.

The message of this poem is directed to men to take part in the armed struggle. Men who are hesitant or reluctant to participate in the war, are regarded as being weak and cowardly just like women. The poet seems to have been influenced by the Oshiwambo orature to compose a poem of this nature because the poem reflects the traditional belief that women are powerless and can only perform simple tasks.

According to Julia Nghishiilenhapo (1996), the *oihanangolo* (girl initiates) call themselves the *aamati* (boys) after graduating from the initiation school. They carry knobkieries and walk around in the forest. They beat the boys whom they come across and say the following when addressing a boy: *Kakadona ove tu teelela* (You small girl, wait for us). A weak or cowardly boy is referred to as a girl in Oshiwambo. The *oihanangolo* also sing as follows:

Eewa, wuu, ovamati oovo!
Eewa, wuu, ovamati oovo
Shihanangolo ke na shipo
Omuntu mutoka ke na shidila
Oha tumbula nahemweno
Naina yakalume oha ti ngaa nimaa ve!

Yes, what a fright, those are the boys
 Yes, what a fright, those are the boys
 The *Shihanangolo* does not have a bad omen
 A white person does not have a taboo
 He can swear at his father-in-law
 He can say 'you rascal' to the mother of the little boy.

The *oihanangolo* compare themselves with boys after the initiation ceremony because the boys are believed to be strong and energetic. It seems that even women consider men to be stronger and more powerful than themselves, because they are persuaded into thinking that they are weak.

GENDER STEREOTYPES OF AAWAMBO MEN AND WOMEN IN PROVERBS, PROVERBIAL PHRASES, LEXICON AND ON THE LEVEL OF MORPHOLOGY

Gender stereotypical issues in the Oshiwambo orature seem to have given rise to sex discrimination among the Aawambo. The Aawambo women are mostly discriminated against by men. The stereotypical issues are observed in folktales,

in proverbs, proverbial phrases, lexicon and morphology. Tirronen and Dammann (1975, p. 135) cited several taboos which discriminate against women:

1. *Omukiintu e na eposi ku ushikwa komumati*. A woman who suffers from sleeping sickness does not get engaged to a bachelor. She is married to a married man.
2. *Omukiintu he ende ta shinuna evi iha hokanwa, oshoka ota ka shinuna po eliko lyomulumentu*. A woman who makes dust as she walks is not marriageable because she will squander the property of her husband.
3. *Omukiintu e na oompando dha kwatathana iha hokanwa*. A woman whose calf muscles cover her ankle is not marriageable.

There are also other sayings in Oshiwambo which are discriminatory in nature such as that a man does not have to remain in the kitchen because he would become a coward. Such a belief has made boys believe that they do not have to do cooking since it is regarded as a woman's task. A woman would also hardly allow her son to stay in the kitchen because of expressions such as *Ino kala momasiga wa fa omukulukadhi* (Do not stay in the kitchen like a woman) and other expressions, such as, *Aalumentu ihaa tala mombiga* (Men do not look in the pot), which are clear testimonies that a man is not welcomed in the kitchen. A boy would also be considered effeminate if he pounded mahangu into flour. Boys who do not have sisters, therefore do the pounding and cooking in secret.

There are also certain tasks which are confined to boys only, such as hunting, tending the livestock, etc. A girl or woman cannot be allowed to do men's tasks. In some cases some girls do tend livestock but such a situation is frowned upon by many men in the Oshiwambo society. A girl can, however, never look after cattle while boys are present.

The Aawambo women are also compared with weak objects or animals. A woman can, therefore, be compared with the following animals or objects:

Ondema – heifer

Onzinzi – cow

Etemo – hand hoe

By contrast, men are compared with the strong animals or objects, for example:

Ekondombolo – rooster

Ontsezi – bull

Ekuya – axe

Okuti – jungle (Mbenzi, 2001, p. 22)

The gender stereotypes here are covered by different metaphors. Such different semantic fields, identified by different lexical fields, have different metaphorical power (Orwenjo, 2010). The metaphorical language is still pervasive in our society today. Thus the popularisation of gender stereotypes through this language is common in everyday communication.

Oshiwambo verb forms also signify stereotypical issues. The contrast between the active and passive verb forms demonstrates sexist language. Women are considered as being inactive people because there are passive verbs which are associated with women, for example:

Hokanwa – married

Yalekwa – engaged

Such verbs appear in an active form when they apply to men. If one attempts to change these passive verbs into the reciprocal form, it is seen as a sign of being henpecked by a woman. There has been a recent attempt, however, to avoid the sexist language which is reflected in verbs, and the use of the reciprocal form is now employed to bridge this gap, e.g. *hokana* and *hokanwa* have been collapsed into a single neutral verb: *hokanathana*. The reciprocal morpheme, [athan], reflects a mutual support as opposed to [w] a passive morpheme which signifies dependency.

Since women are not regarded as being brave, the Oshiwambo language does not really have words which express the bravery which applies to women but words which express bravery, apply only to men, for example:

Oshikulo – brave one

Ekululume – strong man

Men are therefore expected to remain bold and to fight in case of danger. A man does not shout out for help, but should face danger and fight. A man who retreats or runs away from trouble is referred to as an *omukatalume*, the stem of which, [lume] in Oshiwambo indicates masculinity. Sometimes such a man can be referred to as a woman. This shows that sex-typing is largely influenced by the way men and women are brought up and other forms of cultural transmission (Bem, 1981).

Men are also expected not to cry. There is a saying: *Ino lila wa fa omukulukadhi* (Do not cry like a woman). This saying is used to discourage men from crying. At present, even when their loved ones pass away, men rarely weep loudly. They simply sob because they are scared of being mocked by other men and women. Women also do not expect men to cry or shout when they are in danger. Women seem to consider themselves as powerless as well. When a woman is abused she will always ask her male relatives to protect her. Women who do not have a brother in a family, feel degraded. A brother is believed to be capable of settling the conflicts within the family. A man, regardless of age, is considered to be the senior person in the family. Bem (1981) argues that 'cultural influences largely influence how children develop their ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman' (p. 358). This ties in with Oshiwambo saying: *Omulumentu ogwahe, omukiintu ogwayina* (A man belongs to the father; a woman belongs to the mother, i.e. boys help their father with house chores while girls help their mother). In other words, Aawambo see 'heterosexuality as a benchmark for proper masculinity and femininity' (Bem, 1981, p. 357).

The Oshiwambo tribe consists of several extended families. Every extended family has a senior person in the family referred to as *onkungulu yezimo*. This is the person to whom family members go to for advice and the settling of conflicts in the family. This post is never held by a woman. It is often given to a man regardless of his economic status. But a man only becomes a chief of his maternal clan because the Aawambo are a matrilineal society. Children, therefore, belong to the clan of their mother. As a result a man does not see it as his responsibility to maintain his children. The sayings *omulumentu evalelanganda* (a man only produces children for the house) and *mondha ihamu zi ezimo* (no clan comes from the penis). This testifies to the fact that a man's own children do not belong to his clan.

Because women are not expected to hold leadership positions in the Oshiwambo society, it has become hard for men to tolerate a woman as a leader. It is believed that women cannot make decisions without the approval of a man but it has been proven today that there are women who have been successful leaders.

Another factor which shows that a woman is looked down upon among the Aawambo is the use of the diminutive form. The house belonging to a woman is referred to as *okagumbo* (small house). [*Oka*] is a diminutive prefix in Oshiwambo. When the educational system was under the control of the Finnish missionaries, boys and girls in the upper classes attended separate schools. A girls' school was referred to as *okagumbo* (a small house). The *okagumbo* is linked with a low standard. Children from female headed households are considered to be ill-mannered or poorly brought up. They are also believed to be lazy. It is believed that boys from the *okagumbo* will not be able to build big houses and they will not have a sense of responsibility. Every mistake they make is linked to the *okagumbo*. If, for example, a child from the *okagumbo* is involved in a quarrel, it is believed that he cannot contain his anger because he is not taught how to behave. The *okagumbo* is believed to be characterised by ill-discipline, permissiveness and anarchy. The word *okagumbo* when referring to the house of a woman is thus used in the pejorative sense. It is not called *okagumbo* because of its size but it is called such because it belongs to a woman and a woman is said to possess poor qualities.

Closely allied to the diminutive form is the use of a pejorative prefix [*oshi-*]. When the husband dies, his house is called *oshigumbo* (bad house). In fact, anything during the mourning period is regarded as being bad. The plural form of the prefix [*oshi-*] is [*ii-*]. The meat eaten during mourning period is called *oshinyama* (bad meat). The clothes are called *iinguwo* (bad clothes). But when the wife dies, the house is not called *oshigumbo*. The mourners still refer to it as *egumbo*. This is attributable to the fact that the husband is believed to be the sole owner of a house. The bull and dogs are killed when the husband dies because they do not belong to her. The entrance of the house is also shifted when the husband dies, but it is not moved at all when the wife dies. The children of the widow are called *iinona* (bad children) and the cattle are called *iingombe* (bad cattle). A woman does not seem to have control over the house and land. Many women, as a result of these practices, have been driven away from their homesteads after the deaths of their husbands. Although the traditional

authorities do not condone the driving of widows from the land, there are still a few Aawambo who tend to confiscate the land after the death of a husband.

The widow is called *omuselekadhi* ([*omu*] standing for one), but there is no equivalent word for men. This can be ascribed to the fact that a man traditionally married several wives. Even now, however, when monogamy is practised by many Aawambo men, wives are still called *aaselekadhi* ([*aa*] standing for many).

Men are, however still believed to be the gluttons. When a woman is married she is often advised by her mother to feed her husband well. When women prepare food, they always make sure that they prepare a lot of food for the men. A girl is scolded by her mother if she provides the boys with only a small amount of food. Traditionally an Omuwambo man does not eat with the children. The mother eats with the children, while the husband eats alone. The wife makes sure that she gives him enough meat and porridge. If she fails to do so, she risks being beaten by her husband as has been depicted in the poem by Namahuja (1997), mentioned earlier.

Some men may complain that the children disturb them as they eat (Viljoen & Amakali, 1974). Because of men's greed, there are taboos linked to the animal internal organs such as *ehuli* (liver), *elambalamba* (pancreas), *elaka* (tongue), *ondete* (breastbone) and *iitiyanathigo* (kidney). These organs are regarded as the best meat and women are therefore forbidden to eat them. Several Aawambo women today are still scared of eating such organs.

Personal names also play a role in revealing negative attitudes about the greed of men. Men who eat too much are given nicknames. Such names are based on the names of characters in folktales. Names such as Kahwela and Kakoona are very common. The name Kahwela means he who fills himself to the brim. It is based on the folktale in which the main character Kahwela ate too much. The name Kakoona means to scrape (a plate). Kakoona was a character who, because of his greed, turned into a lion and devoured the whole family. Men who eat too much may also be given this name. Women are not given such names.

During the liberation struggle in Namibia, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) fighters were referred to as *iikulo* (brave ones), *oondume dhomomuthitu* (the bold ones in the jungle) or *aamati* (boys). While women also took part in the armed struggle, their contribution is not recognised on the lexical level. Names which are associated with murder, are also only given to a man. For example:

Shikomba (he who wipes out people)

Ntoni (he who kills people) (Tirronen, 1986, p. 303)

It is thus obvious that there are names which are confined to men only. One would never come across a woman who bears any of these names. It must be noted that men play a major role in giving names.

Several writers of the Oshiwambo written literature have also portrayed men and women in different ways. Amakali (1996) relates an event in which a woman was beaten by her husband when she asked him to cook because she was sick. According to Kwedhi (1981), a certain man shouted at his wife when she tried to participate

in a tribal court case. The wife was told to 'shut up'. The character further added that women caused a lot of confusion. He pointed out that his wife should allow the men to talk.

These examples indicate that women are expected to be subservient and submissive to men. A woman is also obliged to behave well. Among the Aawambo, sexual behaviour of women is highly criticised. An unmarried woman who falls pregnant is mocked and rejected by the community. Such a woman is traditionally referred to as *oshikumbu*. The word *oshikumbu* has two meanings. The verb stem [*kumb*] means to thatch. Promiscuous women are also referred to by derogatory terms such as:

Ohwale – promiscuous

Ombwanda – a sex-maniac

Etope lyohenda – the symbol of mercy, but someone who can be easily made use of

Ombwa – dog

A woman who falls pregnant before marriage is also called *omusimbakadhona* (literally, a pregnant girl). *Omusimbakadhona* is a compound word which means a girl who has become pregnant. Even when such a girl is married, she is still referred to as such a person. The child she bore before marriage, is called *okavongambebelela* or *ndjendanayina*.

Apart from the reflection of gender stereotypes in proverbial phrases, there is also a plethora of examples of gender stereotypes in proverbs.

Haapanen (1958, p. 1) provides examples of typical Oshiwambo proverbs which use gender stereotypes such as,

Ontsezi ihayi si ngonzinzi

(A bull does not die like a cow, i.e., a man fights an enemy and does not surrender or get killed like a woman)

Omulunmentu ibo vulwa u fe nyoko

(A man does not become as tired as a woman)

Omulumentu na hokane a pange

(A man gets married to dominate [a woman])

Onkandhindjuhwa ihayi igi

(A hen does not crow, i.e. a woman is not allowed to propose love)

These proverbs portray women as weak.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter it has become evident that gender stereotypical issues are inherent in the Oshiwambo orature. There are several oral poems and tales which portray men as greedy and arrogant characters. Women are portrayed as frail beings but who are clever and responsible.

The orature has revealed that men do not take care of women and children. Most men are still reluctant to support their families. Women and children are abused by

men either physically or emotionally. The life of the man seems to be characterised by selfishness. For example, Kahwela, in the eponymous folktale, does not seem to be concerned about the wellbeing of his children.

Gender stereotypical issues have influenced modern Aawambo writers to be biased against women and in favour of men. As a result of the traditional norms and values which humiliate women, men are not willing to allow women to hold leadership positions. The abuse of women which is reflected in oral literature, is still found in the Aawambo communities.

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8

Who speaks at Spoken Word? Performance poetry in Namibia⁴⁶

Hugh Ellis and Don Stevenson

INTRODUCTION

In the first decade of the 2000s, performance poetry experienced a resurgence in urban Namibia, especially among young Namibians. In Windhoek, this movement was led mainly by the Spoken Word organisation. The organisation has provided a space for a number of previously unknown talents to emerge, many of whom were young women and a number of young people influenced by hip hop music and urban poetry.

This chapter is presented from two sides. Hugh Ellis considers the themes and issues which dominate the work of the performers at forums like Spoken Word, and how these forums have added to the poetic discourse and artistic life in Namibia as a whole. Don Stevenson reviews the development in performance poetry.

Intensely involved with Spoken Word from 2004, shortly after its inception, until 2010, Hugh Ellis performed at the majority of the monthly gatherings and is still committed to at least two or three presentations per year at Spoken Word when his current duties at the Namibia University of Science and Technology allow his attendance.

⁴⁶ Author's note: I would like to express my gratitude to all the performance poets who submitted texts of their poems, which were previously unpublished in printed form, to assist in the compilation of this chapter. – Hugh Ellis

Ellis believes that this commitment and the interaction with members of the Spoken Word group enabled him to make great strides in refining his writing style and developing a poetic voice. Ellis maintains that the initial, intense five and a half years with Spoken Word were, at the time the centre of his life, a view shared by many of his contemporaries in the Spoken Word movement. He believes that Spoken Word played the same role for others. He was privileged to see the development, on the Spoken Word stage, of performance poets such as Bibi Gava, Ryno 'Playshis' Platt, Denver Isaacs and especially Lize Ehlers who has now become a regular feature on the Windhoek performing arts scene as a singer, a poet, an actor and a director.

For some other performers, however, the criticism which was made in the *Insight Namibia* magazine by M'kariko Amagulu (2005) some years ago, remains valid as some observers see Spoken Word as little more than a platform for fame, whilst neglecting the necessary artistic effort.

At their best, the poems performed at Spoken Word give voice to some of the most pressing desires of the youth of today in Namibia, namely, for the relief of poverty, social justice, an end to violence and a politics of compassion rather than of intolerance. The social and economic challenges are frequently expressed as a need for people to empower themselves so as to contribute more to society, as exemplified by these selections from some popular poems:

WHAT ... have you done today ... to make you feel proud?
Was it when u put your foot down and said the time is now to do
things YOURSELF instead of depending on HER? OR HIM?
WHAT ... have you done?

Was it when you walked past the one-dollar begging boy and made
no excuse and just gave him the dollar? Or did you instead buy him
bread and a drink to push it down?

WHAT ... have you done today ... to make you feel proud?
Was it when u realised that you're Namibian and you got rights that
you haven't practised and nobody can tell you nothing ... or was it
when you actually practised your rights to benefit not you but other
Namibians? (Namindo, 2009)

They call this location 'hurry up'
So spare a thought for people on the other side of the tracks
We must help the exploited workers but, to tell you the truth
They must help us wasted suburbanites too
We all say 'hurry up' and I guess we all know why (Ellis, 2004)

This feeling of self-determination could be welcomed as empowering a generation which is often accused of feeling a sense of entitlement rather than being involved in

social action, but it could also be criticised for focusing on the individual rather than demanding action from the government, big business and other social institutions to address poverty.

Another example of social activist poetry at Spoken Word is Denver Isaacs' poem, *The Winds of Change*, which was performed together with the late Namibian musician Jackson Kaujeua, with Kaujeua singing verses of his famous song of the same name in between stanzas of the poem. Once again, the link between personal/cultural identity and social history is explicitly made:

I pray that God would blow a little stronger
 So I can catch a glimpse of where my nation's off to
 Before my coffin's lowered
 And my spirit's forced to ride the wind
 Even then, Ousie Afrika remains within
 Though I was seen as her bastard
 Messin' with a land who said he was her master

She grew tired – his harassment
 And after she left –
 She looked at me and I was his resemblance
 I pray the winds of change will rearrange
 What time can't change
 And while you're at it
 Let that wind carry word to the west
 Tell them Africa will not be bested (Isaacs, 2008)

Isaacs' poem borrows heavily from rap/hip-hop music and lyrics, in the use of rhyme, slant rhyme and at the end of virtually every line; widespread internal rhyme within lines, the use of colloquial expressions, and the delivery of the poem itself on stage. Indeed, many poems performed at Spoken Word over the years have shared these influences, while many have also been performed with different kinds of musical accompaniment.

At one end of the scale, poems such as Hugh Ellis's have borrowed the odd phrase or rhyme scheme from rap or rhythm and blues, while at the other end, many performances at Spoken Word have been hard to classify as either rap or poetry, and have existed on the border of these two art forms.

A reference to religious/spiritual identity has also become common, expressed in different degrees of intensity. Spirituality has generally been expressed in terms of personal salvation and growth, and less in terms of what social or political beliefs a religious faith might entail. An extract from Sibongile Tshabalala's poem *Bandaged, Stitched and Glued Together*, is an example:

I told God all about it
 Told Him I'm falling apart

I tried to say it all
Yet all could not be said
It's all so sad
I gave Him my heart
Shattered, Stripped, Ripped
And open
And here I stand
Mighty hands
Bandaged, stitched and glued me together (Tshabalala, 2009)

At times, there has been a degree of tension between the different poets' religious beliefs, but often this has been handled remarkably well, sometimes with poets of different persuasions performing alongside one another. This can be seen in the selection from the following poem, which Hugh Ellis performed with Sibongile Tshabalala in May 2009.

Tshabalala: 'Let's talk science
The theories, chemistry and physics
And yes E does equal to mc^2
But all this nonsense of evolving from apes
You can believe in that if you want to
Act like a monkey
This is not the time to.'

Ellis: 'Well, as you write you'll examine the evidence and
make your own decision
Listen to what the scientists have to say, read our
ancestors names in genetic code
In the curriculum of life's disciplines you'll find the
most difficult one to adapt to
Is to disagree with others as you disagree with
yourself.' (Tshabalala & Ellis, 2009)

Emotional material, love, and sometimes sex, have all been common in poems at the Spoken Word. At times this material has been handled inventively. At other times, however, it has been handled crudely, with sexually explicit words leaving very little to the imagination, as the following selection from a poem illustrates. At the time it was performed, Spoken Word audience members were divided as to whether such language was acceptable or not at such a venue:

Soooo, it's prisoners of words?
For most of you and her ... the prison is the sweet word 'love' from
him ...
For most people:

Kissing is a habit,
 Fucking is a game,
 He gets the pleasure
 The girl gets the pain
 He tells you he loves you, yet you believe it's true
 But when your stomach starts to swell?
 He says 'to hell with you!' (Namindo, 2008)

CONTRIBUTION OF SPOKEN WORD TO THE ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

In the August 2005 edition of *Insight Namibia* magazine, the published Namibian poet Mvula ya Nangolo criticised what he saw as the 'limited scope' of some of the material presented at Spoken Word, and questioned how much of it was based on a desire for 'local fame'. In the same article, members of the Spoken Word organising committee pointed out that the subject matter of the poems is necessarily varied because of the wide range of backgrounds and experiences of the performers, which are different from the experiences of the older generation. The Spoken Word organiser, Itayi Dube, said the interest from the youth in Spoken Word showed that they were a 'thinking generation' and were unwilling to be 'plastic' or 'commercialised'.

Ya Nangolo pointed out that for some poems the presentation had been so poor that the audience had 'switched off' and had continued talking amongst themselves during performances rather than listening, even in the presence of accomplished published poets such as Christi Warner and Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong.⁴⁷ It has also become customary for a small group of Spoken Word-goers to spend time chatting outside the venue, rather than inside enjoying the performances. There is therefore a need to educate audiences in regard to an appreciation of poetry and respect for the performers. Ya Nangolo suggested that smaller groups should be formed to recite, listen to and comment on each other's poems prior to presentation at the main Spoken Word event. Following this criticism, an audition process has been instituted, where poets present their material to the organising committee before being authorised to present it on stage. This process has allowed an opportunity, however limited, for gentle criticism and improvement of poems.

SPOKEN WORD FROM 2015 ONWARDS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERFORMANCE POETRY

Don Stevenson agrees with Hugh Ellis that Spoken Word is an urban phenomenon which is confined to Windhoek. There are passionately committed members on the local organising committee who have so much to do collectively and individually that they have been able to concentrate only on the nation's capital. The ongoing popularity of the forum may in part be attributed to the insight of the Windhoek Spoken Word committee who have built a kind of community awareness around

⁴⁷ See Chapter 10 on Molapong's perspective on Namibian poetry since independence.

Spoken Word and have promoted the platform in the context of other performance groups such as Free Your Mind, a local comedian initiative, and Song Night which showcases singing talent. Besides poetry, Spoken Word events always host performances by musicians, dancers or comedians, and frequently draw on talent from those groups as directors of ceremonies at the shows.

There is, in this loosely defined community, a sense of the unity of art and performance in the context of social activism and rewarding interaction of Spoken Word performers with other artists. In the spirit of community, the Spoken Word group encourages newcomers to the forum and has progressed from auditions only, to include multiple rehearsals for each show, helping poets to improve both their writing and their performance skills. Criticism is offered in an encouraging manner. Even if a piece is rejected for a specific show, the poet is given guidance on how to strengthen either performance or writing and is encouraged to return.

Performers have improved in self-confidence and writing over time which speaks for the ongoing popularity of the forum. Organisational changes have been made which have an 'educational' effect on audiences. Shows are tightly paced and well-organised to hold the attention of the audience, and the previous intermissions have been dropped. In the absence of an intermission, the consumption of alcohol and its attendant effects have been reduced.

In the context of community it should be mentioned that the Spoken Word committee is committed to social activism through the establishment and ongoing support of a charitable initiative called 'One Love'. After covering its expenses for rehearsal and performance venues, Spoken Word contributes to supporting school fees for underprivileged children. Poets are not paid for their performances unless a specific show or collaboration is hosted by a sponsor or outside organisation.

The question has often arisen whether Spoken Word can be classified as poetry. This is a difficult question to answer as the Spoken Word is a vibrant social phenomenon which, based on attendance at monthly events, enjoys much popularity in Windhoek.

Ellis maintains that poetry is often regarded to be 'difficult' or 'challenging' and therefore uncertain in its position between a performance and what the audience feels to be relevant. Perhaps we romanticise the idea of poetry, and we need to believe these public events are founded on a recognised art form which enhances their status and makes them therefore worthy of our patronage.

Adherents have sometimes focused on the difference between the 'spoken word' and poetry 'on the page'. Stevenson holds that most of the pieces which are well received by audiences tend to be narratives, or are structured like stories and are easy to follow. Pieces which have been influenced by rap or hip hop seem to have decreased in number over time.

Spoken Word has collaborated in holding workshops to promote performance techniques and writing. The Embassy of the United States of America has, on two occasions in 2012 and 2013, hosted visits by American professors of English literature to present the writing of poetry. Both professors were African American women

and their presentations were empowering and exciting. On one such occasion in June 2012, Brenda Flanagan addressed the theme of whether there was a need to celebrate black women.

Whether Spoken Word is art or literature, is beside the point as it continues to give public voice to the frustrations of anger, pain, joy, cultural identity and hormonal activity of urban youth, since most performers are still primarily young people. Its popularity among both performers and audiences was aptly expressed by a poet who said, 'Spoken Word gives me the opportunity to say publicly, things I wouldn't even consider saying in private.' Poetry gives us the opportunity to hear the unspeakable. The social climate in Namibia, more than 27 years after independence, is charged. Economic, political and social circumstances have often not brought about a better life or hoped-for development and so the generation of 'born frees' are still chewing on issues surrounding their Namibian identity while they are struggling with the challenges of being young. Male chauvinism, sexism and domestic abuse are rampant in Namibia. These are issues of social and poetic relevance. The presence of female performers at Spoken Word, and themes of sexual identity, feminism and respect are popular and well-articulated. Veterans such as Nesindano 'Truth' Namises and Queeny Flietes have been strong on these topics, and poets, such as Esperance Luvindao, Mavis Elias Braga and Vanessa Caicedo, are some of the new talents dealing with these social issues.

It is interesting that these issues of worldwide focus take on a distinctly African quality in the hands of young Namibian women who claim their right to be 'attractive' (i.e. sexy) while vehemently rejecting treatment as sex objects or targets of abuse. They wish to assert their unique identity as African women in the face of Western clichés about beauty. Though not at all events, women performers have tended to be in the majority at Spoken Word.

Ellis maintains that Spoken Word has much potential and has recommended the following: Firstly, that it needs to establish smaller groups where poets can interact and gain inspiration from one another. Secondly, that it needs to encourage performances by more established poets, and by poets not linked to the hip-hop music tradition. Thirdly, that it needs to educate its audience (and some performers) on an appreciation of poetry and how poetry differs from other forms of entertainment. Both having been nurtured and challenged as poets at Spoken Word, Hugh Ellis and Don Stevenson are confident in the future of poetry as an art form in Namibia.

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9

‘Call of the Witpensuikerbekkie’: Landscape as symbol in contemporary Namibian poetry⁴⁸

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INTRODUCTION

Namibia, proudly called the ‘land of the brave’, is a country of imposing geographies extending from the majestic Zambezi river in the north to the Fish River Canyon, the second largest in the world after the Grand Canyon, in the south and from the sweeping sand dunes of the Skeleton Coast in the west to the arid, brown rolling mountains and plains in the east. The Namib Desert dominates the geographical landscape of Namibia, just as it looms large in the consciousness of the Namibian people. It is not surprising that it also appears in contemporary Namibian poetry. Namibia is a land of wide spaces and its landscape, both rural and urban, presents images which challenge both the poet and the reader. While the rural landscapes are at once, natural and mysterious, the urban landscapes consist of townships which have their own culture and significance in the post-colonial, independent Namibia. Namibian poets have attempted to encapsulate the haunting beauty of the desert with its natural flora and fauna on the one hand and the rhythm of the urban settlements on the other, to evoke what can be called a unique and distinctive identity which is very different from that which was imposed by its previous colonial masters.

⁴⁸ *Witpensuikerbekkie*: Afrikaans name for White-bellied Sunbird, *Cinnyris talatala*. The line is taken from one of Werner Thaniseb’s poems.

Ever since its independence in 1990, Namibia has seen an upsurge of creative writing, particularly poetry, in English. Early poets have concerned themselves with the liberation struggle of Namibia and the resistance. They have spoken poignantly of the oppressive apartheid experience and the desire to restore their human dignity which was affected by the racist South African regime. It has also been a celebration of their identity as black people, taking their cue from great Negritude poets such as Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor and others. It is interesting to note that the SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organisation) party, pushed the agenda of English over and above Afrikaans, which had become the lingua franca of South West Africa, as Namibia was then known. The poetry of this period was therefore, also an attempt to capture the nuances of the African experience in an 'alien' language. Named the 'literature of combat' (Melber, 2004, p. 11), the poems of the new nation were expressions of the ideological thought and philosophy of their poets. They were the manifestations of their desire to describe the conflicts embedded in their society. It was also their direct message to their people, urging them to resist the colonial oppression and to fight for the freedom of their country. In a certain sense, the poetry of this period was propagandist and a reflection of the people's aims and aspirations in the liberation struggle. Interestingly, even though it had emerged from a situation which was fraught with anxiety and anguish, the literature of combat did not preach violence. It embodied the need for peace and prosperity, as could be clearly seen in the poetry of Mvula ya Nangolo, who was called the father of Namibian poetry with the early publication of his anthology (Ya Nangolo, 1991). This explored the themes of alienation and exile through his language. It should be remembered that many Namibians had to flee the country during the struggle and had to eke out a living in refugee camps in different parts of Africa and Europe. Ya Nangolo, himself, had been in Tanzania and Zambia for several years working as a correspondent before he could return to his motherland. His poetry, therefore, is both an evocation of the anguish of an exile, as well as a celebration of the joy of a returnee.

Winterfeldt (2005, p. 16), in his introductory essay on Namibian poetry, has pointed out that there are two main thematic areas on which Namibian poets have mainly focussed, namely, the external world which consisted of the political struggle and the social life which influenced all Namibians and secondly, the internal world which has encapsulated the inner turmoil of poets growing up in a new environment. Vale (2008, p. 28) on the other hand, has identified three distinct thematic periods in Namibian poetry which consist of the past, concentrating on the historical theme, the present, which focuses mainly on the critique of the society as it is now; and finally, the future, which includes poems which are visionary by nature. Using the metaphor of 'unearthing', Vale proceeds to claim that it has been an exciting project for her to 'unearth' poems and to categorise them into the three thematic areas. It is interesting to note that literary critics, such as the two previously mentioned, and others (Melber, 2004; Malaba, 2010), have not attempted to identify the metaphors which form a part of the consciousness of the poets. Interestingly, Dorian Haarhoff

in his book, *The Wild South West* (1991) describes Namibia as a 'frontier' in the South Western imagination which challenges the writers of this land. He contends that 'the frontier serves as an elaborate metaphor for each successive group of writers as Namibia is appropriated for the metropolitan needs' (Haarhoff, 1991, p. 5). The Namibian landscape, in this instance is the 'other' need. It is, therefore, the response to it which will be different from that of the indigenous Namibian poets for whom it is the 'motherland'.

My chapter extends the groundwork which was laid by earlier critics by identifying the mega-metaphors in Namibian poetry and establishing a link to the linguistic underpinning of my analysis to the thematic concerns of the poets. In order to do so, I have made use of cognitive stylistics with a particular reference to the Conceptual Metaphor theory within the broad theoretical framework of Text World Theory. By making use of the theoretical approach provided by the Conceptual Metaphor theory, I would argue that the landscapes in Namibian poetry deeply underscore the crucial importance of land to culture and identity. While talking about Native Americans, Martin (2006, p. 131) states that landscapes present alternative histories to the mainstream culture and question accepted notions about the meanings of places, by exposing the lingering traces upon the land of violence, oppression, forced labour and ecological damage. These more unpleasant aspects of landscape also contribute to the formation of the identity of the people who live within the land, and the land which bears the scars of the struggles for political power which have been enacted upon it. As James Joyce (Walcott, 1971, p. 37) therefore points out, the question of identity and the formation of identity is 'forged in the smithy' of the aftermath of the political unrest leading to the liberation and consequent upon this, during the nation building.

TEXT WORLD THEORY

Cognitive stylistics is a new development in the field of stylistics which previously emphasised the analysis of the language of literature. While not abandoning the original premise of making any analysis 'rigorous, replicable and retrievable' (Simpson, 2004, p. 37), cognitive stylistics introduces the concept of the Text world and Discourse world to account for the way in which we respond to texts. The Discourse world is the real world, whereas the Text world is the one which is created in the text, and is a conceptual space in which there may be certain sub-worlds, depending upon the switches which take place due to the shifts in time or space. Stockwell (2007, p. 148) points out that:

Sub-worlds, in text-world theory, consist of the same world-building elements (time, location, characters and objects) and function-advancing propositions as the text-world level. Sub-worlds are conceptual spaces triggered by temporal alternations (such as flashbacks), spatial alternations, *metaphors* (which are literal in the sub-world but metaphorical in the text world), negatives (positive in the

sub-world and negated in the text world), and modalised propositions (such as speculation, conditionals, imagined alternatives, obligation, desire and emotion). [*Italics indicate my emphasis.*]

Metaphors therefore, acquire a special meaning in the text world. In order to reach the meaning and emotion of poetry, it is necessary to examine the metaphors which occur in poems. The Conceptual Metaphor theory is derived from the Text world theory and this is of particular significance in my examination of the poems of the contemporary Namibian poets.

According to Lakoff and Turner (1989) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are ontological and epistemic mappings across conceptual domains, namely, from the source domain to the target domain. One example of a metaphor is: 'LIFE AS A JOURNEY.' The source domain is a journey and the target domain is life, as can be seen in Robert Frost's famous lines in his poem, *Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening*, with which he ends the poem: 'I have miles to go before I sleep.' The line refers to both a physical journey and the journey of life itself; 'sleep' refers to rest on the one hand and to eternal rest on the other hand, which is death. In literature, new metaphors are created all the time in order to create new text worlds. As Requejo (2007, p. 58) states, ' (the) creation of new metaphors in a text can produce significant, even if transitory changes in the way we perceive the world around us'. Developing the notion of mega-metaphors, Werth (1999, p. 323) opines that mega-metaphors represent the most 'prototypical and primitive frames in our culture.' Lahey (2010, p. 159) points out that, 'this understanding of the metaphor as a device by which the cultural norms and values of a society are communicated, is of considerable value for the studies which seek to situate the production and reception of literary texts within their cultural contexts.'

Along with the use of mega-metaphors, this chapter will also examine the use of the deictic markers which are crucial in situating the metaphors in their context. Deixis originally comes from the Greek and means 'pointing' or 'indicating' (McIntyre, 2010, p. 123). Levinson (1986) identifies four types of deixis: temporal, personal, social and empathetic deixis. According to McIntyre (2010, p. 123) temporal deictics 'indicate metaphorical proximity and distance in relation to the point in time, at which a speaker makes their utterance (e.g. now and then; yesterday, today and tomorrow).' This is noteworthy in my analysis of the poems because of the metaphorical connectedness of the temporal and spatial dimensions in Namibian poetry.

NATION AND NARRATIVISATION

For a nation emerging from apartheid and entering into a new era of freedom and liberation, several factors have contributed towards nation building. According to Malaba (2010 p. 68), a Namibian poet, Molapong, 'stresses the importance of having a strong sense of identity as a black person and challenges the youth not to blindly accept western values and tastes.' The first and the foremost is an identity

formation which can only evolve through an integration within a community of sufferers. For a community formation and a successful transformation to take place, one needs to revisit the recent past and enable the trauma to be verbalised through narrativisation (Caruth, 1996). Testimonial literature, as this is named, provides the mental space for trauma and memory to be co-joined as imaginative and fictional. Knowledge of the past can be clouded if there has been trauma and therefore, the memory can play tricks, lose precision, downplay certain events and amplify certain others. This loss of individualised precision and force of memory, contributes towards universalised aesthetics which endow community formation on a common platform through a common understanding of identity. Edward Said (1978, p. 55) in *Orientalism*, argues, ‘imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of self by dramatising the distance and difference between what is close by and what is far away.’

LANDSCAPE IN LITERATURE

Geography in general, and landscape in particular, has always had a major role to play in literature. In British literature of the Victorian age, one may recall the description of the heath at the beginning of Thomas Hardy’s famous novel, *The Return of the Native*. Subsequently, the all-pervasive presence of the heath makes it a character in the novel which influences the lives of all participants in the story. In Canadian literature, landscape, language and culture are closely intertwined and melded together for the formation of a Canadian identity. In American frontier literature, landscape is a compelling, majestic and mysterious place which has to be conquered. The Australian outback also tempts explorers to invade and colonise the land. Finally, in the 20th Century, the African continent represents a symbol of expression of a space/place which has been conquered and colonised. This space/place is not just physical and material, but also metaphorical and ‘manifested through culturally and ideologically negotiated representations’ (Urbanc & Juvan, 2012, p. 319). The landscape also affords a canvas on which journeys, both literal and symbolic, can be painted. All great literatures are stories of quests or journeys, whether physical, as in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, Melville’s *Moby Dick* and Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, or the emotional/spiritual journeys through time, such as Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Achebe’s *No Longer At Ease*, Roy’s *The God of Small Things* or Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, to name but a few. At a deep philosophical level, all literature is about quest, whether it is physical or spiritual, material or immaterial, temporal or spatial where the landscape acquires the contours of a mindscape.

The landscape is the imprint of man upon nature. Humankind has an indelible impact on its environment. It is our responsibility to ensure that we preserve the monument of creation which comes to us as a gift from a higher power. In the Namibian context, the government has placed strict restrictions on traversing certain sand dunes which form the natural heritage of our country, with a view to preserving the landscape and preventing its destruction at the hands of tourists and visitors.

Talking about the indigenous aesthetics of the North American native people, Steven Leuthold (1998, p. 199) points out that, 'the source of the sense of place is in the interrelation of several elements namely, language, art, religion, social life and views of nature.' A profound sense of place grows out of the linkage of the spiritual and natural worlds and contributes to indigenous aesthetics.

NAMIBIAN POETRY

John Povey (1983) in an early essay titled *Landscape in Early South African Poetry* states, 'Admiration for the peculiar beauty of the territory becomes one element in the developing emotional commitment that in time, will aggregate into patriotism.' (p. 116). Namibian poets concern themselves with the establishment of a connection with their environment by turning to the landscape of Namibia as a stabilising physical articulation of identity formation and nationhood. Poets use geographic metaphors extensively and register their experiences in the form of images of landscapes which become knowable and palpable through intellectual exploration. They also invest the landscape with a sense of inherent rationalism in the belief that it nurtures as well as sustains its peoples. Concurrently, its sublime beauty heightens their senses and expands their imagination. Because of the intimate relationship between history and experience, the Namibian landscape occupies a singular position in the minds and writings of several contemporary Namibian poets.

I have examined a corpus of nearly 200 poems, both published and unpublished, between 1999 and 2014 for the purpose of my analysis of the use of the landscape in Namibian poetry, with the view of establishing a connection between the discourse world and the text world. Further, I was also interested in investigating how the use of the landscape contributed to the identity formation among Namibian people. I was not interested in the individual poets and the themes which they expressed in their poetry. Rather, I was keen to identify the patterns in the use of landscape metaphors which were common to poets in Namibia. These poems have been collected over a period of ten years. An analysis of the 200 odd poems has revealed that it was possible to identify four metaphors which recurred (in the poems which I read). I call these, the 'mega-metaphors' of Namibian poetry. They are the following:

1. LANDSCAPE AS FEMALE

The external landscape is a metaphorical representation of a woman, who is a mother, grandmother or queen.

2. LANDSCAPE AS ANCIENT TIME

The landscape is a metaphorical representation of time past.

3. CITY (WINDHOEK) IS A NEGATIVE PLACE WHILST A TOWNSHIP (KATUTURA) IS A POSITIVE PLACE

The urban landscape is a metaphorical representation of the negative and positive aspects of geography.

4. ROAD IS A JOURNEY OF LIFE

Road is a metaphor for the journey of life.

LANDSCAPE AS FEMALE

It is interesting to note that the African continent has been conceptualised as a woman. Within the external landscape, which is the source domain, there is a metaphorical mapping of the target domain, which is female. The text world conceptualises the discourse world as a woman. Thus the landscape is gendered though its formation in the poet's mind and its reinforcement takes place through several nuanced repetitions. LANDSCAPE AS FEMALE is a configuration of an entity which can give life and nurture, sustain and comfort the poet. Additionally, landscape in this case also provides an emotional sustenance for the poet. Let us look at some of the examples given below:

Julia Amukoshi (*Tales of the Rainbow*)

Remember the great legends
of the beloved mother Africa,
Remember the blood and tears
Shed for our mother Africa
... Remember to come home
Back to mother Africa (*Nostalgia* in Amukoshi, 2014, p. 63)

Mvula ya Nangolo (*Watering the Beloved Desert*)

I,
He,
She,
Are children of this land
Brought up by mother Africa's own hand. (*Meekulu* in Ya Nangolo, 2008, p. 21)

Mvula ya Nangolo (*Watering the Beloved Desert*)

Last born of an ageing mother Africa
Spent much time in a political incubator.
... I am Africa's last born child
In unison, they announce. (*I am Africa* in Ya Nangolo, 2008, p. 54)

Hungiree Wilson Billawer (*In Dialogue with Afrika*)

Children, children, children,

Look for her in the deserts

Seek for her in the forests

Search for her in the mountains

... She loves her children no matter from where. (*Mother Africa* in Billawer, 2013, p. 52)

Hungiree Wilson Billawer (*In Dialogue with Afrika*)

If I write you a poem

That makes you a queen

Just as strong and beautiful as

The Ancestral African Queen. (*If* in Billawer, 2013, p. 56)

The metaphor of Africa as a motherland belongs to a fixed repertoire of patriotic rhetoric. It is an example of the use of a metaphor which travels from place to place, from language to language, time to time and continent to continent. It stands for an authentic feeling which a poet expresses whether it is by an experienced poet as Ya Nangolo; a first time poet, such as Billawer, or a female poet, such as Julia Amukoshi. The landscape is described in positive terms, evoking an emotional response and contributing to a feeling of stability and belonging. While Amukoshi envisions Africa as a mother to come home to, an interesting shift takes place in this example. The first two lines speak of an ancient land (which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section), 'Remember the great legends /of the beloved mother Africa' (Amukoshi, 2014, p. 63), deictically evoking a distant past through the use of the lexical item, 'remember', and 'legend'. The next two lines describe a past which is of a more recent nature, 'Remember the blood and tears/Shed for our mother Africa', referring to the freedom struggle. The last two lines, 'Remember to come home/ Back to mother Africa' (Amukoshi, 2014, p.63), reduces the deictic distance from far to near, through the use of 'come' and 'back'.

In Ya Nangolo's line from his poem titled, *Meekulu*, which means grandmother in Oshiwambo, the lines: 'I, he, she, Are children of this land/ Brought up by mother Africa's own hand' (Ya Nangolo, 2008, p. 21), evoke a sense of intimacy and togetherness through the simple yet effective way the lines are graphologically arranged on paper. In the next poem, Ya Nangolo identifies himself with his mother, with Africa. This sense of identity arises from a sense of togetherness which is clearly articulated in the lines, 'I am Africa's last born child, In unison/ they announce' (2008, p. 21). It is said that the identity of the child is always first derived from the mother.

Billawer seeks the beauty of mother Africa in the landscape made up of deserts, forests and mountains. The Namibian landscape is made up of the three geographical constructs mentioned above, but they represent not only Namibia, but are also projected onto a larger canvas of Africa. For Billawer, Africa is a mother who provides

a safe haven for her children whoever they are. She accepts them with their failings, to give them refuge. In the last example, Billawer speaks of his lady love, whom he compares to an African queen. The notion of majesty and royalty are attributes which bolster an image of land that is above one's station, a land which is at several removes from the level of the ordinary, and evokes a certain awe which cannot be explained, but is only felt and acknowledged.

Let us look at the next set of metaphors which recur in Namibian poetry. If Africa is identified as a female and as a queen, it is fascinating to note that Namibia is not only identified as female, but also as a grandmother. All the poets which I have studied, envision Namibia as a grandmother. The Grandmother – *Meekulu*, has a special place in Namibian communities. Given the fact that, due to HIV/AIDS, many young people die leaving their children to their grandmother to be looked after, the grandmother herself acquires a symbolic quality through poetry. Some of the examples are:

Hungiree Wilson Billawer (*In Dialogue with Afrika*)

You raised me up
in the old African tradition
... You are old now my African Queen
Age is getting you. (*Grandmother Kaami* in Billawer, 2013, p. 34)

Mvula ya Nangolo (*Watering the Beloved Desert*)

I,
He,
She,
Are children of this land
Brought up by mother Africa's own hand. (*Meekulu* in Ya Nangolo, 2008, p. 21)

Werner Thaniseb (*After the Rain*)

The place where grandma's
Story, time was a treasure despite the smoke burning tears from
your eyes. (*Jannie Pos* in Thaniseb, 2011, p. 26)

In all three examples the target domain is Africa/Namibia/Land which is mapped onto the source domain of grandmother. The grandmother has a special pride of place in the local culture. She is a figure of respect and a source of endless stories and wise sayings. She is also the matriarch who controls and directs the tribes. She is the fount of wisdom and a figure of unselfish sacrifice. It must be noted that many tribes in Namibia are matrilineal. If we were to further examine the gendered identification of land as female, this land can be ravaged.

Dorian Haarhoff (*Bordering*)

Britain, the Victorian sexist took his
Trawlers penetrated the only vagina
in a thousand miles
believing her womb was desert
They withdrew from commitment
To the post-climactic clamp of a land
That for her own sake
Could have been possessed. ... (*Walvis Bay* in Haarhoff, 1991, p. 46)

Gerson Sindano (*Independence*)

This beautiful land is still virgin
Though enemies broke its virginity
The journey was more painful than that of a
An 'undiscovered woman.' (Namibia: unpublished poem)

The Namib landscape is described as a virgin and untouched, but is defiled by the touch of the coloniser. The verbs of violence 'penetrate', 'broke' signify the defilement of the land which takes place when strangers enter into a frontier which has not been explored. This exploration is not presented in a positive light by the Namibian poets as can be seen in the two examples given above.

LAND AS ANCIENT TIME

This particular metaphor governs the poetic landscape of Namibia and is of particular interest to the researcher. It is interesting to note that even though Namibia is one of the youngest countries in Africa, having gained her independence only in 1990, all poets, without any exceptions, recreate Namibia as an ancient land. Some of the examples follow:

Dorian Haarhoff (*Aquifers and Dust*)

In the artesian spring of this Namib summer land
The lakes flowed forty meters deep,
it shone like a bronze medallion
third in the ancient world.
... a shift of earth
Thirty thousand years
before the Portuguese
cut the lake's source. (*Etosha Dust* in Haarhoff, 1994, p. 17)

Dorian Haarhoff (*Bordering*)

Once upon a womb
In Sprokieswoud

A moringa tree
Seemed transfixed
In a witch's sleep
Its bark ancient and pale
Blue grey as death. (*An Etosha Tale* in Haarhoff, 1991, p. 12)

Hungiree Wilson Billawer (*In Dialogue with Afrika*)
Do not forget that Afrika
Does not need tribalists and racists
Afrika is the mother of all creation
Please rule it accordingly. (*Nostalgia* in Billawer, 2013, p. 43)

Hungiree Wilson Billawer (*In Dialogue with Afrika*)
My village I cannot tell lies about you
You are the creation of my ancestors. (*My city my village* in Billawer, 2013, p. 53)

Hungiree Wilson Billawer (*In Dialogue with Afrika*)
If I dedicate you a poem
That turns you into a queen
That is courageous and determined as the ancestral
African queen
What are you gonna say? (*If* in Billawer, 2013, p. 56)

Hungiree Wilson Billawer (*In Dialogue with Afrika*)
Do you come from ancient times?
Or from the beginning of mankind?
Do you come from slavery?
Do you come from colonialism?
Please Pan-Africanism, tell me where you come from? (*Pan-Africanism* in Billawer, 2013, p. 66)

Werner Thaniseb (*After the Rain*)
I have a big nose they say I am the runner and
The tamer of the land so pristine and rugged
I say,
Look at his colossal head they gasp!
Hah, it carries stories of time immemorial
...
Look at my dance and listen to my song
It tells of stories as old as the land. (*After the rain* in Thaniseb, 2011, p. 24)

Werner Thaniseb (*After the Rain*)

My people, where are you at?
... when I look over my shoulder
I see the desolate silence – where once stood
... sons and daughters of Namas and heirs of Haihab
(of heritage of unmatched grandeur)
You once walked tall among the nation of man
And of this land of great expanse and wonders. (*To Khoen* in
Thaniseb, 2011, p. 36)

Werner Thaniseb (*After the Rain*)

City made from the sweat of my ancestors. (*Ae//Gams// Windhoek*
in Thaniseb, 2011, p. 20)

Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong (*Come Talk Your Heart*)

Have I mentioned this?
The human life evolved in Africa
Inside the beautiful jungles
That caught the tasteful eye
Of my great ancestors
Display its mysterious beauty (*Your none-sense* in Molapong, 2005,
p. 86)

Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong (*The Scars on My Skin*)

This land we call ours is cursed
From times and days immemorial (*This land* in Molapong, 2014, p.
56)

Mvula ya Nangolo (*Watering the Beloved Desert*)

Dust of time covers not our memorable past
As seabirds feast from a fisherman's cast
To reckon with we are still a global fact
Here we deal with natures' huge harvest
Survey fish stock or huge elephant's tusk. (*The Namib Desert* in Ya
Nangolo, 2008, p. 52)

Mvula ya Nangolo (*Watering the Beloved Desert*)

Now that Mama nature is old
As all the best wishes in every heart
Now that she is old ...
... Let us together now
Do the frog dance before tomorrow

Praise our ancestors without sorrow. (*Hunters' Song* in Ya Nangolo, 2008, p. 9)

Mvula ya Nangolo (*Watering the Beloved Desert*)

Daughter of our unforgotten ancestral chain

When you hear a bird singing in the tree

It is singing our traditional love song. (*In the Village* in Ya Nangolo, 2008, p. 43)

Mvula ya Nangolo (*Watering the Beloved Desert*)

When time gave birth to itself

Here in Africa's womb itself. (*Africa's Time* in Ya Nangolo, 2008, p. 49)

In all the examples given above, a sense of the 'pastness' of the past and its presence, is created through the use of tropes which are linked to a mythological age. In the poetry of all the poets, Namibia emerges not only as a land of great vastness, but also as a land which is very old and belongs to an ancient time. If we examine this further, we notice that this ancestral past is a time of pristine beauty and great tradition. Most poets lament that Namibia's greatness is lost in the distant past and that it can only be retrieved through memory. In fact, the poets regard it as their duty to remind their people about the greatness of their land which has been swallowed in the mists of time. All the poets presented consider it their duty to impart a sense of tradition and culture to their people. This lyrical representation of Namibia as natural and unchanging is part of an idyllic representation of the land as well as an ideal which has the quality of a dream. The vast land, the sprawling desert, the Blue Mountains and the baobab tree which has been 'upended' on a desert patch, are praised in rapturous verses. It is, in fact, strange that no poet describes the harshness of the desert. The desert is presented as an archetype which encapsulates the quintessential indigenous consciousness of the Namibian people. All poets evoke an idea of a land which is pre-historic and pre-political and which belongs not only to the realm of a mythological age which gives it a magical, mystical quality, but also to a land which can be reclaimed through the imagination. All poets present a romanticised version of the Namibian landscape. The past is reproduced through numerous recollections both individual and collective. Some of the tropes which are used are, 'ancestors,' 'ancestral,' 'time immemorial,' 'ancient times,' 'beginning of mankind,' 'heritage,' with deictic markers which are distal, such as for example, 'thirty thousand years ago,' 'once upon a womb,' 'where once stood,' 'where you once walked' and other examples.

This yearning for the ancestral past and the landscape wafts through most poems. Bound to these imaginings is the attitude of the people for whom this landscape becomes an intimate inner landscape of their minds. Compared to the landscape of the past, the contours of the present delineate a disjuncture which only

creates a sense of alienation and placelessness where no-one belongs. The present and the contemporary is undesirable, unaesthetic and unwanted, unsavoury and objectionable.

CITY IS A NEGATIVE PLACE (WINDHOEK), WHILST A TOWNSHIP IS POSITIVE (KATUTURA)

Any chapter on landscape would be incomplete if, after exploring the rural landscape, the urban landscape were forgotten. Modern poets live in the city and the urban landscape influences their writings. Urban landscapes feature the iconic symbols from both the past and the present. As pointed out by Thomas (2011, p. 13), the Empire State Building in New York and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco become representative artefacts of their cities and are 'emblazoned in the consciousness of the city dwellers and visitors all over the United States and all over the world.' They become metaphors for the cities themselves.

Some contemporary Namibian poets have written about Windhoek, but their poems are largely negative in tone. On the other hand, Katutura, a township in Windhoek is described in positive terms. Before the country's independence, the white and black population were segregated from one another. While the whites lived in the city, the black people were confined to the *lokasie* (location), Katutura. Katutura therefore becomes a metaphor for an emerging black consciousness with a distinctive Namibian culture and tradition. The two parts of the city became symptomatic of the two different cultures, with poets celebrating life as they knew it in the *lokasie*.

Werner Thaniseb (*After the Rain*)

Dark city
Cold city
Wet city
City made from the sweat of my ancestors
The place where people march in unison
Like characters in a black and white silent movie
... Caught in endless march-forward on a treadmill.
City of sorrow
Where man's soul is a commodity. (*City of Windhoek* in Thaniseb, 2011, p. 26)

Julia Amukoshi (*Tales of the Rainbow*)

Cars crowding up
on the weary road
people mushrooming everywhere
beggars praying in wet corners
for the next meal. ... typical city Friday night. (*Friday Night* in Amukoshi, 2014, p. 34)

Keamogetsji Joseph Molapong (*Come Talk Your Heart*)

I am just a black face
Filling an empty space
In my dirty township
Blessed with friendship. (*Heart* in Molapong, 2005, p. 9)

Werner Thaniseb (*After the Rain*)

(The place born of pleasant anguish)
... The spirit of togetherness abounds
You bloom with the colours only
a rainbow can contain
... the place where corporate and *ikasia*
culture is like pap and *vleis*
Where a man is judged by his word and
The sound of his laughter. (*Katutura* in Thaniseb, 2011, p. 26)

Kavevangua Kahengua (*Invoking Voices*)

Don't be ill
In the city you live on
Borrowed hopes
Borrowed money
Borrowed time
You prop the city
Notwithstanding its massive
Weight of debts. (*Everybody Needs You* in Kahengua, 2012, p. 11)

In all the poems presented above, it is clear that the city is not a place to be appreciated because it diminishes and dehumanises the people who live there. For both Thaniseb and Amukoshi, Windhoek is a city of sorrow and anguish. For Kahengua (2012), the city is like a huge monster which drinks the blood of its inhabitants. He urges the people who live in the city not to fall ill because nothing can belong to you in the city. The meaninglessness of city life is starkly presented in contrast to Katutura, a township in Windhoek, which is described in glowing terms. Katutura becomes symbolic of togetherness and camaraderie where the rich and poor are treated alike and there is no distinction between the people who drive fancy cars and those who arrive in a taxicab.

The urban and rural landscapes are linked with each other through the physical aspect of road, paths, driveways.

ROAD IS A JOURNEY OF LIFE

It is interesting to note that road is imagined as something dangerous and alien to the environment. In other literatures, the road is symbolic of a journey which leads to paradise. In other words, it is conceptualised as something positive, whereas in Namibian poetry it signifies the opposite. Let us look at some poems where roads are used as a metaphor:

Annelie Nghikembua (*A True Me in Words*)

Ain't I a woman of courage?
A long way I have come
Through shabby roads
I have learnt to walk. (*A True Me in Words*, 2013, p. 4)

Keamogetsii Joseph Molapong (*Come Talk Your Heart*)

When the road started sailing
The moon mocked the weakening sun
The smell of the burning horizon
In the endless distance
Reminded me of bread and home. (*Traveller* in Molapong, 2005, p. 5)

Keamogetsii Joseph Molapong (*Come Talk Your Heart*)

Oh! Let me apologise
For all the words I have uttered,
For all the paths I have wandered,
For all the places I have seen.
... Life taught me a lesson
It is a circle itself
It starts when a life is born
And ends when death comes
In all its expressions. (*The Horizon is Calling* in Molapong, 2005, p. 13)

Keamogetsii Joseph Molapong (*Come Talk Your Heart*)

The horizon is calling
I have seen the youth talking
Walking towards the horizon
Never to return home. (*The Horizon is Calling* in Molapong, 2005, p. 13)

Keamogetsii Joseph Molapong (*Come Talk Your Heart*)

They say they are going to tar our roads
A black like thing, like a cobra

They put on the roads
 To keep the dust quiet
 And out our ears and eyes.
 But I wonder where it is from
 What will happen if we walk on that road
 how sure are we that
 If a quarrel starts,
 Between us and the owners
 They might not roll up their road
 And carry it away with them. (*Omokurukaze's Thoughts* in
 Molapong, 2005, p. 95)

Hugh Ellis (*Hakabana*)

The highway glistens in the street light
 It passes faster than I can think.
 Everyone thinks they're on this highway to wealth. (*The Highway* in
 Ellis, 2012, p. 10)

The roads/paths/highways are linked to urban life and modernisation in a way which cannot be explicated. They provide an escape from a difficult life to a life of affirmation. They are the path to success as one moves from the rural to the urban environment. In many cultures, the road becomes a metaphor for a movement which is productive, beneficial and useful. Namibian poets however, take a diametrically opposite view of the road. For Nghikembua, roads are 'shabby'. Molapong, on the other hand, believes that the road leads to a place of no return as he explicates in his poem *The Horizon is Calling*. If we remember that many people left their homesteads to look for jobs in mines and have never returned, Molapong's lines acquire a tone of despair and distress which tug at the heart strings. Therefore, the horizon calling becomes a symbol of a place of no return. Molapong is very explicit in his depiction of the road. For him, the road is not a metaphor for life, but is a metaphor for failure. He is being very ironic when he asks, 'How sure are we/if a quarrel starts/they might not roll up their road/and carry it away with them?' Without the concurrence of the people who are going to use the road, carving out the land and laying the asphalt, this is a meaningless gesture. Clearly for Molapong, the road has negative connotations because he describes it as a 'black cobra'. If the road represents modernisation, then its existence in the Namibian landscape is not a positive one, because it serves as an illusion of a better life which is never fulfilled. Even Hugh Ellis (2012), who is a markedly urban poet, and a modern one at that, is suspicious of the road about which he says, 'Everyone thinks they're on this highway to wealth' (p. 10). The road is an example of cultural hybridity. On the one hand, it tempts one to travel along it in the hope of a better future. On the other hand, it can lead one to despair and death. Is this not a post-modern condition? According to Urbanc and Juvan (2012,

p. 210) in new post-modernist enquiries, 'landscape is no longer just material and physical reality, but the social and cultural text the reading of which facilitates the discovery of conceptual layers and practices of anthropogenic reshaping of the natural bases that created the landscape as text.'

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the analysis that the landscape exerts a psychological undertow in the consciousness of Namibian poets. Each and every one of them displays a strong sense of place which is a depiction of their own emotional response to the environment. The sense of a place is integral to identity formation because it underscores and emphasises the deep attachment between the self and the place or land. Each poet's cognitive-emotional and physical-spiritual feelings are closely intertwined and built up of singular, isolated and cumulative memories. Recollections of ancestors form a key aspect of a community's memory bank which, along with individual narrative identities, follows a circadian cycle instead of a linear one. The ownership of the land bestows a positive response towards it because of the sense of belonging and security which merges and amalgamates to produce a primordial and authentic feeling.

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10

Namibian poetry since independence: A poet's perspective

Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong interviewed by Helen Vale

Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong is a versatile and talented Namibian poet and playwright who is also a director and the actor who played the role of Jacob Marengo in the eponymous musical in 2013, a production which won many accolades at the Namibian Theatre and Film Awards the following year.

'I write my poetry because
I want to say something ...
I write to right what I think is wrong ...'
I write from my heart ...' (Molapong, 2005)

Molapong has been involved in performance poetry and community theatre for over 30 years, giving workshops to young people and working with theatre groups around the country. His two poetry anthologies are *Come Talk Your Heart* (2005) and *The Scars on My Skin* (2014). Personal and political, satirical and poignant, his poems span diverse themes from disillusionment with independence, a critique of corruption and the new black political elite to the pain of love and loss and the nature of poetry itself.

In 2001, Molapong established his own company, Township Productions, which has worked with numerous artists on poetry, theatre, radio productions, TV programming and TV documentaries over the years. He sees publishing as the biggest challenge for poets, since traditional publishing houses are reluctant to publish poetry as it has no economic value. Hence the *Poetree* publication was

initiated by Township Productions to support the work of new, younger poets and to date it has featured 15 poets in five volumes.

For many years Molapong has used Theatre for Development (TfD), Forum Theatre and poetry to start conversations about issues of national interest. His innovation within the discipline of theatre and poetry has enabled him to make a living from the arts. He also writes a poetry blog called 'Words'.⁴⁹ With his honest, witty and engaging poems, Molapong is one of Namibia's leading poets.

In an interview with Helen Vale, Molapong was asked about his early experiences as a youth growing up in an apartheid Windhoek 40 years ago. As the youngest member of a family of six children, Molapong experienced the loss of a sister whilst he was still young. The family lived in a location called *Gemengte Lokasie* (a 'mixed' location) in Katutura where the different ethnic groups communicated in Afrikaans as the common language.

As children from the *lokasie* they grew up in total isolation from white people. The exceptions were the rare occasions when the children were taken to town to get new clothes. Molapong remembered, 'That was when we experienced the other side of life, an almost illustrious world of wealth, beauty, luxury, a dust-free world. Even so, we experienced second-hand apartheid with our parents telling us how to behave and what not to do when in town. At times they oriented us before taking us to town. Our next opportunity to go to town depended mostly on our conduct on the previous trip. One of the instructions was that we should not run around and stare at white people. In short, we were to behave as adults and obey the virtual ethics of being in town. I graduated from this level of experiencing apartheid with the weekend cleaning of the yard of *Ou Miesies*. As kids, we prided ourselves in cleaning yards during the weekends; usually the yards of our mothers' place of work, earning a living for ourselves at an early age.'

First-hand experiences of apartheid came later in life when going to town was no longer a ceremony and he and his friends risked experiencing the wrath of both young and adult whites. At that point in their lives, what trouble they got themselves into for being black in town became the root of narrations to other friends. They became storytellers of their own misfortunes.

Molapong's interest in writing and poetry started at secondary school as a direct influence from his Afrikaans and English teachers. He enjoyed reading and back then the only books available were the Afrikaans picture books, such as *Die swart luiperd*, *Ruiter in swart*, *Kid die swerwer*, and *Die wit tier*. A book like *Die grens vegter* contained propaganda material about terrorists and Cubans and how the *Grens vegter* character defeated them in every single edition. *Saal tien* was a romantic book popular with the girls.

At the time Molapong started writing poetry, the Namibia National Student Organisation (NANSO) had a great influence on young Namibian students, encouraging a totally different and liberal thinking. The students marched, boycotted and experienced the wrath and might of apartheid through its apparatus such as the

⁴⁹ www.keamogetsi.blogspot.com

soldiers and Koevoet. They began talking politics, and, becoming more aware of apartheid, could identify and label behaviour which contributed to segregation and the 'divide and rule' policy. 'My writing started in the midst of all these political developments,' said Molapong. 'I started writing, specifically poetry in response to the realities crippling our country.'

Assessed as the most outspoken and angry of all contemporary poets, Molapong commented, 'Should my poems reflect anger, then it presupposes that the community in which I live is an angry one. For I only write what I see, feel and experience from my community. I am, however, not as outspoken when in conversation with people as I am in my poetry. My poems, therefore, carry my emotions and thoughts.'

In 'Mister Bottle', for example, from the collection *Come Talk Your Heart*, Molapong drew on his experience in Rundu where, for the first time, he saw children asking for empty bottles instead of for food or money. The narrator is not drunk but named from the plea of a little boy calling him 'Mister' and asking for an empty bottle. Molapong explained why he uses humour in his poems: 'humour in literature and other mediums of expression sticks in one's mind! We are constantly in the habit of making our world beautiful through humour. I use humour to capture the interest of the reader. When something is funny, we enjoy it more and wouldn't mind telling it to the next person. Humour relieves us from a lot of stress. It helps us laugh at ourselves once we have overcome difficulties and even painful experiences.'

When asked about 'virtues' in preference to 'values', Molapong explained that values were like traditions, becoming redundant with time. He compared values with Namibian politics and religions which demand that the electorate be loyal and faithful, entrusting their wellbeing to those who may misrepresent them. He believes that we should be truly governed by solid virtues like truthfulness, dedication to the betterment of all lives, and honesty, and life would be easier and simpler.

After independence, Molapong's acting and theatre work began, and with the help of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), he participated in the self-development of Namibian communities through projects such as the now defunct Bricks Community Project. Theatre was used as a platform and technique to raise awareness on various social issues. Answering whether he thought there was a wider audience and readership amongst young Namibians for plays and poetry currently, Molapong described the background to this question. He thought that most Namibians were scared of books, believing more readily in hearsay than what was written on paper. Whilst Namibian or African tradition is oral, he believes that especially young Namibians ought to read more. Although Community Theatre Groups love to create and stage plays, they have always been challenged by script writing and reading, whether for school, research or leisure. The appreciation of poetry, however, is something that Molapong has experienced unequivocally. He is aware of the many girls and young women who have written poems but are too shy to share or recite them, whilst boys and young men regard poetry as too emotional and prefer RAP which, Molapong points out, actually is Rhythm And Poetry.

Molapong was then asked about the themes in his first anthology *Come Talk Your Heart* which seem to be both personal and political. He believes that our lives are shaped by politics, whether we are actively involved or not. Since poetry is a personal and emotional response to events of which we all are a part, Molapong writes to right the wrongs in a personal way because he is aware that he exists in a political realm. Molapong says, 'Poverty, illiteracy, disease and ignorance are all shaped by the socio-economic construction of our political intelligence.'

Asked about Township Productions, Molapong describes its mission as being to produce theatrical, literary, audio and visual productions that will advance and complement national programmes and be available for artistic consumption by the local, regional and international communities. Molapong always wanted to assist other artists and art forms and has achieved this aim through Township Productions with poetry, the theatre, radio productions, TV programming and TV documentaries. Township Productions is a service provider and has done commissioned work with developmental, educational and research projects as well as for scientific institutions. The company has introduced theatrical concepts such as Industrial Theatre, Forum Theatre and Activations, collaborating with smaller companies and organisations geared towards the development and advancement of arts activities in and outside Namibia.

When asked about the difficulties of making a living as a full time artist, Molapong's answer was that it could be very risky and at times suicidal. He regarded himself as being involved in arts, rather than an artist. 'Arts is just part of my life and not the complete me.' He has diversified his skills within the arts as a writer, a director, sometimes an actor and mostly as a producer. With a diversified approach to the arts, he has been able make a living.

The extension of activities into the broader Southern African region engaged Township Productions in collaboration with a Zimbabwean NGO to initiate the first Southern African Development Community (SADC) Poetry Festival which had been aimed at bringing together poets from the SADC Region to celebrate written and performance poetry. The first festival had been hosted in Namibia in 2010 and the second in Botswana in 2012. Poets and visual artists had been engaged in a variety of creative processes and activities, and had discussed the significance of the arts in the realisation of socio-economic integration of the community. Unfortunately, the festivals came to an abrupt stop when funding could not be secured for a third festival in Swaziland.

Another side to Molapong's desire to assist artists comes out of the limited platforms for poetry besides the monthly Spoken Word event that takes place once a month in Windhoek.⁵⁰ Apart from the general fear of presenting their poetry to an audience, many people in Namibia are writing poetry which has grown in popularity over the years. Molapong declares that the biggest challenge for poets is publishing and funding. Township Productions initiated the *Poetree* publication to create an affordable alternative to the current expensive and selective publishing

⁵⁰ See Chapter 8 in this volume.

industry in Namibia. Five volumes of *Poetree* have featured more than 15 poets, as well as two pocket size poetry books, and two A5 publications of poetry. More publications are being prepared. In recent years and with funding from the National Arts Council of Namibia (NACN), many authors have chosen to self-publish their work, whether poetry, plays, short stories or novels.

When asked about the development and changes in the fields of poetry and theatre in Namibia since independence, Molapong's assessment was that both audience and productions have changed, with theatre being widely practised and appreciated. Before and right after independence, theatre was perceived as an elitist activity. After the South West African Performing Council (SWAPAC) was transformed into the current National Theatre of Namibia (NTN), more black theatre, dance and music productions were featured in place of the previously dominant Western plays in English and Afrikaans. Organisations such as the Bricks Community Project introduced the concepts of Theatre for Development and Community Theatre as methodology and catalyst for community development work. Theatre was used as a transformation tool throughout Namibia. Movements such as Ama Poets became tools for social change. Through performances and recitations, the poetry group has attempted to conscientise the audience and young people into appreciating themselves as human beings and sharing their experience, convictions and aspirations. Propaganda material made way for literature that fostered nation building and reconciliation. The content and relevance of material and publications which have been produced after independence reflect a broader and more positive picture of Namibia and its people.

Commenting on his second anthology, *The Scars on My Skin*, Molapong pointed out that it had been 10 years in the making since his first collection, *Come Talk Your Heart* was published by New Namibia Books in 2005. He believed that there was little difference in the themes of the two anthologies but he was wholly responsible for the content and control over the publication of the second volume which he had found an empowering experience. Above all, Molapong felt that he had grown over the years, had experienced criticism, shared his work with audiences and had graced the stage with regional and international poets. He had taken a keen interest in crafting yet allowing his writing to speak for itself. Working with other poets had given him the opportunity to learn the tools necessary to cultivate talent and nurture existing talents in others.

In his own concluding words, he said, 'I have found my voice within the writing of poetry. It was a learning process throughout these years but I have finally worked out a space for myself in the poetry and literary circle in Namibia. I have more volume in my voice and that itself is growth for me.' To wrap up the interview, Molapong offered his advice to aspiring poets, actors and directors: 'I encourage you all to get an academic education and at all times engage in creative processes like workshops, performances and discussions. One cannot rely on pure talent anymore. Talent with education will certainly bring the arts to a higher level of quality and appreciation.'

For this chapter, Molapong was asked to choose one poem from each of his anthologies and to comment briefly on them to assist the reader to gain more insight into his poems. His choices and commentary follow below:

Dog Bite (Molapong, 2005, p. 106)

I saw you one day, limping
And you told me you were paining
That a nasty dog gave you a chase
Free of charge. I believe, ha. Ha, haa
You walked like a cowboy, I said, laughing
And you extended the laughter into a joke
Shooting at me as if John Wayne, dead now
Still you pulled the trigger once more and I laughed
I watched you limping, I believe to Penduka⁵¹
Your legs were bowed, your colour shirt flirting
A laughter escaped me, as I imagined myself
How the dog must have given you a chase, haa!
Just imagine, a Shirumbu⁵² chased by a flock of dogs
Hasting to avoid confrontation of teeth and blood
A Shirumbu on the loose, followed by barking dogs
People watching and laughing at the funny Shirumbu
Poor Shirumbu, not being able to keep the dogs away
Suddenly dives to the ground and wished it over
People watching and laughing at the funny Shirumbu
Pointing and crying, tears of laughter, more laughter
The dogs bite and tear on the flesh of the Shirumbu
Shirumbu shouting and insulting the packs of dogs
Kicking and slapping, will possibly bite next time
And share the pain and acquaintance with the dogs
Dust escapes the Shirumbu as if sexually satisfied
Dogs walk and talk about the white flesh they tasted
Swaying tails as if to say: See you one day Shirumbu
It was a pleasure biting you, so long Shirumbu, so long
Silhouette of people watching and laughing at dusk
Talking, wishing the Shirumbu to be chased once more
Poor Shirumbu, limping on, happiness gone, pain present
Blood, pain, torn trousers, dusty clothes, tired lungs, hate
Once again I saw you limping, greeting with a smile
Remembering my poem: *I'll cut my leg and send it* ⁵³

⁵¹ A woman's development project in Katutura.

⁵² A white man.

⁵³ See 'Poor me' in Molapong, *Come Talk Your Heart*, p. 104.

Still you laughed and felt the pain. Still you laughed
 Limping, feeling the pain, limping on and on and on.

The poem has so much humour amidst the pain. The only character with mixed feelings in the poem is the poet. He is sympathetic towards the *shirumbu* who happens to be known to the author as opposed to the amusement of the spectators and the satisfaction of the dogs. With time painful events can become humorous.

My Sleep (Molapong, 2014, p.64)

Again
 I just lost
 My sleep
 To thoughts
 Drenched in sweat
 Underneath
 My night pillow
 Thoughts snatched
 My sleep from right under
 My exhausted self
 And braved the long road
 To a land occupied by ideas
 It was just a while ago
 That I was under the spell
 Of a heavenly tiredness
 A drowsiness I embraced
 And took myself to bed
 Hoping to put my body
 To a peaceful sleep, so deep
 The heat wave would envy
 Me, resting my body but ...
 Like a thief
 In darkness and night
 My restless thoughts
 Dragged the sleep
 From underneath me
 With so much purpose
 That I ended up writing
 This poem that is ending

The pattern of this poem speaks for itself, yet the story within the poem tells a different story. The imagery in the poem and the possibility to explore this kind of writing gives me as the poet a sense of freedom in crafting my thoughts and emotions.

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11

Representing Namibian drama (1985–2000): Frederick Philander

Laurinda Olivier-Sampson

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to look at the playwright, Frederick Philander, who published plays between 1985 and 2000, as an example of a Namibian playwright. This chapter also tries to establish to what extent Philander's drama scripts have reflected the socio-political milieu in Namibia during the five years before the country's independence in 1990 and again, during the first ten years after independence. Eldred Jones (as quoted by Beuke-Muir, Vale & Zappen-Thomson, 2002, p. 295) maintains that there has always been a connection between literary production, both in terms of process and outcome, and the social and historic environment producing it. As stated by Beuke-Muir et al. (2002, p. 295) '... the intellectual product and its producer and the societal – i.e. cultural, socio-economic, social structural, political – framework are thus contributing to the sociology of literature.'

Philander has been selected because his published plays offer a framework for research. This does not mean that he is the only person who was active in this field, far from it. The Namibian dramatic lexicon only really shows published texts after 1990, but as Zeeman (2000) stated, 'this scripted "first" belies more than a decade of theatre making that hasn't found its way into text.' This may be explained by the fact that most of the propaganda drama and popular theatre practitioners did not have access to publishing houses and that an issue had been resolved within a performance before they moved on to the next issue. As 'amateurs', their concerns

regarding daily living, overrode the need to leave a written legacy. Yet, despite the lack of a dramatic canon, amateur theatre in Namibia has played an invaluable role and has reached audiences which the commercial theatre or the establishment could never reach. Most of the drama created by Namibian artists during the period under discussion, might be said to fall within the description of popular theatre as defined by Prentki and Selman (2000, p. 8): 'Identifying points of change and analysing how change could happen and contribute to the actions implied'.

The theatre becomes a part of the process of identifying and exploring how a situation or issue might be understood and, if possible, how it might be changed. When a play is directly relevant to the lives and concerns of an audience, a process begins which can lead to deeper understanding and change. Prentki and Selman (2000) state that, when an audience can watch rather than live an experience, they can 'objectify' the problem and in so doing, they can begin to think about possible solutions or alternative actions.

In the 20th Century Brecht attempted, through theatre of alienation, to guide his audiences to a point where a problem could be 'objectified' and, as such, be addressed and solutions could be found for it. The literature indicates that different names were given to the same phenomenon which was referred to as popular theatre for the purposes of this research.

As early as the 1930s, workers in the United Kingdom made use of a form of theatre very similar to the popular theatre and that form later became known as the Agit-Prop theatre. As was the case with a large proportion of work done in Namibia during the period under discussion, there were hardly any extant scripts from the Agit-Prop era. Goorney and Macolly (1986) argue that it was understandable that no records of the early Agit-Prop records could be traced. These performances dealt with day to day political issues and were 'by their very nature ephemeral – long forgotten notes on bits of paper, if written down at all' (Goorney & Macolly, 1986, p. vii).

It is significant that the same problems which were dealt with in the Agit-Prop plays and popular theatre (used in the sense of Prentki and Selman) of pre-independence Namibia, such as unemployment, oppression and environmental degradation, are still relevant today.

Huwiler (1992) gives a slightly different definition of 'popular theatre' in the African context. She declares that it is:

A 'People's Theatre' and has as its philosophy the idea of developing a social and political awareness in people, the masses. Theatre is more than mere entertainment. It is used didactically to change people's situations. It became a new tradition that absorbed the people's songs, drama, dance, drumming, puppetry and indigenous languages. It also dealt specifically with local problems that all could identify with. (1992, p. 26)

What Huwiler lost sight of, however, was that while this type of theatre served an important function within the African context for some time, it was not unique

to Africa. It had already been practised outside Africa as was shown in the work of Boal, Prentki and Selman, to mention only a few. The resistance was not only to political oppression, but to an oppression and coercion in general. Boal (1979) for example, rebelled against the prescriptive and coercive nature of theatre as set out by Aristotle. For the context within which Boal worked, which was theatre of the oppressed in South America, the popular theatre paradigm proved more effective in getting audiences more involved in the process of the performance.

Kerr (1995) defined popular theatre as:

Popular theatre includes performances of drama, puppetry, singing and dancing. These performances are called 'popular' because they are aimed at the whole community, not just those who are educated. They are performed in local languages and deal with local problems so everyone can understand them and find them useful. This new type of theatre builds on local ability and interest in story-telling, singing, poetry and dancing. (1995, p. 151)

While there are some correlations among the different definitions, there are also subtle differences. For the purpose of this chapter, the definition of Prentki and Selman (2000) forms the backdrop for the discussion. The definitions by Huwiler (1992) and Kerr (1995) amongst others enhance the understanding of how the term 'popular theatre' has been used in this discussion.

From the above, it is clear that for many people working in theatre in African countries after independence, popular theatre was seen as a useful vehicle to address matters of the day. The form was sufficiently flexible to accommodate the existing forms as well as any acquired forms. Plays could normally be divided into four categories; firstly, there were the plays with village settings which dealt with familiar themes such as tradition versus modernity, love versus customary marriage, witchcraft and infertility. In Namibia, this was reflected in the work of Sifiso Nyathi with his plays *God of Women* and *Oracle of Cidino*.

The second, and by far the largest category, were the plays which dealt with modern urban society – corruption, crime, poverty, unemployment, the problems of the youth, greedy in-laws, alcoholism and insanity. This trend was reflected in Namibia in the unpublished works of Keamogetsii Molapong, Frederick Philander and others.

The third category comprised political plays, where the theme was the spirit of liberation and independence of the African continent. In Namibia, this was reflected in the works of, among others, Frederick Philander, Vickson Hangula and George Weideman. The fourth and last category consists of the historical plays which were reflected in the work of Frederick Philander, Dorian Haarhoff and Aldo Behrens.

It is important to remember what Goorney and Macolly (1986) remarked about Agit-Prop theatre because that also applied to many of the popular theatre works in Namibia before independence. This lack of records has been a concern which researchers in this area encounter only too frequently.

Popular theatre was, however, not the panacea to solve all the problems encountered by the performers. The problems encountered and cited by Huwiler in countries like Zambia, Uganda and South Africa, resonate with the Namibian situation especially after independence. She declares that:

Despite efforts to encourage people from low income groups to attend, only a few turned up. When the theatre was taken to the people, audiences watched passively, but discussion did not rise to the occasion of cultural rebirth. The troupes performing traditional dances became a mere organ for government functions and used to entertain visitors to the country. (Huwiler, 1992, p. 28)

The latter sentiment has particularly validity in the Namibian situation. This author has been frequently amazed when receiving telephone calls from officials in various government departments who have needed, at very short notice, a performance 'put together' to entertain visiting dignitaries. The mechanisms needed and used to 'put together' a performance, seemed to be lost to those making these requests. Invariably it fell to the troupes performing traditional dances to entertain visiting dignitaries.

WINDHOEK PLAYERS

In his publication, *The Namibian Theatre Movement*, Philander (2002) has dealt exclusively with his own work. An uninformed reader may well reach the conclusion, given the title of the publication, that his was the only theatrical activity in Namibia. Philander has claimed that the Community Theatre Movement in Namibia had started in 1979 (when he arrived in Namibia from Beaufort West in the Western Cape, South Africa) with the main aim being to 'activate, conscientise, [sic] inform and enlighten people on the multiple socio-political problems of the then ethnic-divided [sic] society by means of theatre' (Philander, 2002, p. 2).

He said that 'with the exception of the conventional colonial theatre practised by the then South-West African Arts Council, community theatre was non existing [sic]' (Philander, 2002, p. 2). This was a statement which was disputed by André Strauss (1999) who argued that a distinction should be made between three types of theatre, namely: the commercial theatre, the conventional theatre forms using community themes and the community theatre which worked directly with communities and voiced current concerns of the communities. He felt that Philander's work belonged to the second category.

During his early years Philander staged the work of Adam Small and later, the work of Athol Fugard. When he wrote his own plays, he made use of the same format (based on that of Small and Fugard), with actors on stage delivering their performance and the audience in the auditorium, passively receiving the message. The way Strauss understood community theatre, the community should have been actively involved in all stages of the production and in the end, become what Augusto Boal (1979) referred to as 'spect-actors'.

Philander found that much preparatory work had to be done to get 'black people' interested and involved in something which was relatively new to the local indigenous culture. What Philander failed to point out was that it was the Western approach to the theatre that may have been new, as well as the concept of theatre per se. Performance was not new and the 'black people' who were referred to by Philander, had a long and rich history of performance. He maintained, however, that once the ground work had been done, a positive reaction followed from the individuals who showed passion, flair and determination to expose the 'Black man's plight through theatre under apartheid rule. In essence it was a creative move to counter the colonial-political influence' (Philander, 2002, p. 2). Philander echoes the sentiment of the SWAPO cultural office when he writes that 'theatre was used as a tool for political emancipation of the hearts and minds of the people, particularly whites who were ... ignorant of the hopes, dreams and aspirations of Blacks' (Philander, 2002, p. 2). How this was to be achieved, was not certain since the plays were performed away from white audiences. According to Philander, his performances were 'issue related' expressions by the underprivileged section of the Black community.

Philander felt strongly that the impact and influence of community theatre on education, culture and economics, had for too long been underestimated by those in power, both in the past and the present (the present referred to here is the period up to 2002). In his experience, many groups and individuals had suffered under the oppressive system because of their steadfast adherence to their principles and this was, to a large extent, reflected in the unwillingness of the private sector to assist initiatives by black playwrights and performers in general. What this implied, was that the artists would not compromise their beliefs to meet the prescriptions of the donor bodies. This lack of support was a matter that continued to recur throughout the period covered by this chapter.

Philander (2002) summed up the contribution of community theatre, in this case referring to his own work, as follows:

Over the years community theatre uncompromisingly exposed, poked fun at, informed, educated and enlightened the Namibian people on different levels and through many forms of theatre; grass roots, community ect [sic]. In this regard many practitioners were seen as cultural activists with a mission. Some were politically vulnerable and were taken advantage of. Others stood firm, maintained their independence, integrity and are still pursuing their theatrical hopes and dreams as cultural combatants. (p. 2)

Philander did in fact make history when, in 1979, he performed Adam Small's *Joanie Galant-Hulle* with two 'black' performers as part of the Windhoek Drama Association in the Windhoek Theatre, which up to that time, had never allowed a non-white across the threshold, other than as a general worker. He said that 'it was the first time that Blacks had acted for Blacks on a White theatre stage in South West Africa' (Philander, 2002, p 4.). Much of their repertoire was taken from the

works of Athol Fugard, until the time that Philander began writing his own plays, starting with *King of the Dump* in 1985. Philander recalled that he was banned from the premises of the Windhoek Theatre in 1989 through what he blamed on the 'confrontational attitude and the fear of impending political change' (Philander, 2002, p 4.) by the director of the theatre, Hannes Horne.

SERPENT PLAYERS

In 1982, the Windhoek Players established a youth wing, called the Serpent Players. According to Philander (2002, p. 4) this was the first Black youth group to have taken part in the *Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereniging* (ATKV) *Tienertoneel* both locally and in South Africa. This youth wing of the Windhoek Players seems to have been driven by the same philosophies as the mother company. Always a pragmatist, Philander applied for financial assistance wherever he could. He wrote that during the Second Tier government in Namibia, the group had been forced to cast actors along ethnic lines in order to qualify for 'bits and pieces of government funding' (Philander, 2002, p. 4). The National Youth Theatre festival started by Philander in 1982 was to continue for many years.

THE PLAYS

Oliphant (2005), in the foreword to the *Collected Plays* by Philander, observes that 'to read the plays of Philander is to be confronted with that genre of playwriting, which engages social and political issues' (p. 4). He noted that this kind of writing, wherever it was practised, was part of a broader political and cultural resistance to the colonial, economic and political crises specific to each society. After a liberating event, such as Independence Day, this form of theatre assumed a new post-colonial orientation. Oliphant argued that: 'it engaged the new social conditions, or to use Chinua Achebe's phrase, it examined the "hopes and impediments" which came to bear on independent states' (Oliphant, 2005, p. 4). Philander's anti-colonialist sentiments were voiced by characters in post-colonial settings.

All of Philander's plays dealt with protest against the social injustices and the abuse of power. To quote Oliphant (2005):

In the anti-colonial social articulation, where the axiology of power runs along the divide of a subjected indigenous population excluded from the state on the one hand and a supremacist settler community with exclusive access to state power, on the other, these (Philander's) plays address and expose the untenable nature of colonial power. (p. 4)

After independence in African states, the racist order of minority domination was replaced by non-racial democracies, governed by the majority. Now, the post-colonial playwright had to reposition him/herself. In the Namibian context, Philander's plays soon indicated that the power shift was merely one of colour and that the

basic oppression continued, albeit in the form of an economic disempowerment. His protagonists continued to be marginalised and freedom became a theory, rather than a lived experience. As Oliphant (2005) said of Philander's plays, most notably *The Porridge Queen* and *The Teacher*, there were direct allusions to the historical moments in which the plays were set. 'This is done by way of parodying the nationalist mantra of political leaders who constantly remind the population of sacrifices which were made for the attainment of political independence, as a way of urging them to make further sacrifices under new conditions' (Oliphant, 2005, p. 5).

The problem with this issue was that the populace associated independence with utopia and this utopia had not materialised for the majority. The national sense of expectation was gradually being replaced by a sense of defeat and dejection. In all of Philander's plays, there were characters who had nothing positive to say about life in a post-colonial Namibia. Oliphant noted that:

In play after play we have characters articulating dismay as a litany of problems ranging from corruption, nepotism, abuse of power, bureaucratic incompetence, ethnic prejudices, poverty, unemployment, economic exploitation, child abuse, disease, sexual exploitation, illiteracy and a number of social ills that could be found only in the most degraded and clapped-out societies imaginable, is presented. (Oliphant, 2005, p. 5)

As such, Philander's plays voiced the concerns of certain sectors of the Namibian society at various stages after independence and the message which came across was that these sectors had gone beyond the celebratory moments to the realisation that they were no better off and that suffering had not ended with the hoisting of a new flag. Oliphant posits that the post-colonial history in Africa had, without exception, followed a trajectory of freedom, hope and disillusionment and that this was reflected in the work of Wole Soyinka from Nigeria and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o from Kenya, amongst others. In many of Philander's plays, the theme of disillusionment has been dealt with repeatedly.

While this kind of writing was not very popular with the ruling elite, it has been a vital element in any national discourse. These were the kinds of plays which have reflected the socio-political atmosphere as experienced by a society at a specific moment. An important point made by Oliphant (2005) is that anti-colonial literature was dismissed as artless propaganda and that post-colonial governments used the same tactic. By denying the artistic merits of such works, the playwrights were being discredited and hopefully silenced. If ever this tactic had been applied to Philander, it did not work. He continued to write and produce his plays.

Oliphant's view was that this style of writing was 'symptomatically and diagnostically oriented. The symptomatic modes were to be found in the social problems and ills ... and the diagnostic mode resided in the explanation offered by the plays with regard to these problems' (Oliphant, 2005, p. 7). Even if the artistic value of the plays had been negated, they still served a function. According

to Prentki and Selman (2000), the content and method of presentation was recognised and related to by the audience. In Oliphant's view, all theatre was socially grounded insofar as all forms of theatrical writing depended on a set of codes and conventions shared by a particular society. This was the society represented in the works and the members of which would also be the primary audience of the drama. He noted that 'all theatre, no matter how abstract, is irreducibly social' (Prentki, 2000, p. 6).

Philander's work accentuated the social problems and presented itself in relation to those problems. These plays sought to actualise the economic, ethical, social, cultural and political changes promised by liberation and decolonisation. The disappointment expressed by many of his characters, echoed the disillusionment felt by many in the society since the characters in his plays were mostly from the lower ranks of society. Oliphant (2005) argued that these characters represented the suffering population which was shut out from the comforts and privileges of the affluent and powerful classes and individuals in society. These characters were his protagonists, and the antagonists were either from the elite groups or their behaviour represented the elements which were associated with those groups. Many of the settings in his plays were representative of the comfortless world which was inhabited by his marginalised protagonists. Oliphant reasoned that 'Philander's work was concerned with the prevailing social order and its human ramifications' (Oliphant, 2005, p. 8). This sentiment supports the hypothesis of this chapter that the Namibian drama performance, scripted and unscripted, was a representation of the socio-political milieu of the time, particularly during the years of the liberation struggle and the early years of independence.

PUBLISHED WORK

Philander has published a number of plays and, therefore, serves as a good source for the student of Namibian theatre history. His published works include *King of the Dump*, a play about those who make their living from the refuse of others; *The Porridge Queen*, a play which uses the character of a street vendor to serve as a mouthpiece on current events; *The Beauty Contest*, a play about deception and attempted sexual exploitation; *The Teacher*, a play which tells how the education system manipulates those in its employ to spread its message while at the same time parodies the less than ideal education system; *Victim of Love*, a play that deals with racism, intolerance and HIV/AIDS (This play was made into a film); and *Will of a die-Hard Soldier*, about the reminiscences of a 'coloured' soldier who fought in World War II.

Philander was one of the first Namibian playwrights who addressed the issue of HIV and AIDS through his work. He voices the concerns of the community about these issues in *The Blood Brother*, which also addresses the issue of prostitution. *Katutura '59* tells of the eviction of the people from the Old Location and their relocation to Katutura and *Mole People* is about the infamous Lubango dungeons of SWAPO where those accused of being spies or collaborating with the South

African government or defence forces, were imprisoned. *The Railway Man* is about a 'coloured' South African railway worker reminiscing about the times before independence, providing a social commentary on what it was like living as a non-white in a small Karoo town, while *Election Fever* (1990) celebrated the euphoria of people allowed to vote for the first time in an independent country, while at the same time satirising the manifestos of political parties. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Philander and his Committed Artists of Namibia, has been their annual play festival. This has been an ongoing event which has become part of the Namibian cultural calendar.

PERFORMANCES

The work of the Committed Artists of Namibia has continued throughout the period of the liberation struggle into a newly independent Namibia and right up to the present time. Their annual play festival has showcased the work of their director and resident playwright, Frederick Philander. Philander has continued to stage the same canon after independence. While the political foe might have changed, the social foe has remained in the form of poverty and unemployment. As he has always done, he has continued to take his plays to festivals and venues in South Africa. The same plays are being re-staged up to the present.

In 1992, Philander caused considerable controversy in Windhoek by presenting full nudity on stage in his play, *The Beauty Contest* (as reported in *The Namibian*, 27 May, 1992). The roles were enacted by Felicity Celento and by Philander himself. The play was subsequently taken to Grahamstown where the criticism centred more on the quality of the play than on the nudity. In Windhoek, there were two camps, those who were highly critical of Philander and those who staunchly supported him. Philander responded in a vitriolic manner in the press to those who gave what he thought were negative opinions.

In 1998, Philander took *The Railwayman* to South Africa and received good reviews for his show (Jean Fischer in Philander, 2002, p. 35). The play was described as protest theatre by Whitebooi (1998). The play reflected on what it was like growing up in Beaufort West under apartheid and Whitebooi described the play as being simultaneously full of pathos and humour. Botma (1998) however, thought that the sentiments in the play were outdated although the new dispensations in Namibia and South Africa had not brought immediate utopia for the railway workers like those in Philander's play. All the critics felt that the writing and acting styles needed polish, but they found the play on the whole touching. According to Philander, the play was about poverty, irrespective of what colour you were. It just so happened that Philander himself had experienced poverty under apartheid.

As mentioned, Philander stages some of his plays every year and he has built up a loyal following. People, who might otherwise never have been exposed to drama performances, have enjoyed the theatre experience as a result of Philander's tireless work.

CONCLUSION

Namibia has a rich history of storytelling in all its forms. This chapter dealt with some of the work of one storyteller, Frederick Philander. There are however, many others who used the stage as a forum for their stories. Philander is an important figure in the history of Namibian theatre because he has been consistent in his output and offers a rich source for the student of Namibian theatre history.

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12

When applied theatre is no rehearsal for the revolution⁵⁴

Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja

INTRODUCTION

The late critical pedagogue Augusto Boal (1979) once stated ‘The theater itself is not revolutionary: it is a rehearsal for the revolution’ (Boal, 1979, p. 122). Let us take that as a starting point to speak about the struggle for collaboration, access, visibility, voice, place and critical engagement in Namibian contemporary arts and its applications to educational, community, therapeutic, organisational and other social contexts. This chapter is a story about several creative research projects focused on the radical transformation in my arts praxis and the inadequacies of these experiences. I also cite my own theatre making, performance and writing experience of working in other SADC countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique.

Let us define applied arts as an integrated praxis of making use of the arts in community, educational, therapeutic and other social contexts. This is the work of making use of visual and performative arts to facilitate learning and healing for a specific community. Applied arts is a broader area that embodies different forms that are primarily defined by their contexts. Under the umbrella of applied arts we can

⁵⁴ The chapter was initially written on Organisational Theatre in the Namibian context taken from my MA research work completed at the University of Namibia in 2012. It has since shifted into the broader spectrum of applied arts due to the changing nature of my practice as a contemporary Namibian cultural worker.

identify sub-areas of work such as Theatre for Development, Community Creative Arts, Creative Arts Therapies, Playback Theatre, Museum Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Curatorial Arts, Autoethnographic and Autobiographic Arts, Drama in Education and Organisational Theatre/Industrial Arts. I make reference to some of these sub-areas in the following sections of this chapter. I also discuss how these interweaving contemporary practices are always changing as continental and global scholarship continue the theorisation of applied arts.

Process is at the centre of applied arts praxis. Alex Mavrocordatos, who spent some time in Gibeon in the south of Namibia developing the Community Listening Theatre, asks the following vital question: 'The question is where to begin the process, identifying the point of entry and initial engagement between partners, and the guiding principle or methodology that may be involved' (Mavrocordatos, 1998, p. 8).

The thinking around how the process of community engagement comes together and what we discover in it is fundamental to the practice. As critical reflective practitioners coming from outside the given communities, we are required to be mindful about how we negotiate processes with the communities that we work with. A lot of the professional language in applied arts encourages safety, agency, collaboration and embodiment in the learning or healing process. These are important ethical considerations because communities have been historically exploited by academics and practitioners in the name of community engagement. One of the educational and research centres that is at the forefront of applied arts work on the continent is Drama for Life which is a centre at the University of the Witwatersrand offering post-graduate academic and inter-disciplinary community programmes in Applied Drama, Drama Therapy, Performance Studies and Theatre Making. In November 2008, it hosted the Africa Conference on Applied Drama and Theatre where the Ethics Working Group developed the Ethics Declaration which considered issues that must be given urgent attention by all practitioners at all stages of the facilitation. It suggests the following:

1. It is accepted that ethical principles as expressed through Human Rights declarations are fundamental to all research and intervention, but that their expression and lived expression is contingent and context bound.
2. There should be acknowledgement of the ideological basis of applied drama and theatre as embedded in Freirean principles of dialogue and empowerment, with concomitant ethical principles.
3. It is recognised that applied drama interventions may have unequal power implications; practitioners should establish a spirit of mutual respect among all parties involved, and all participants in the intervention should follow the principle of doing no harm.
4. There should be transparency about the purposes, intentions and methodology of the research/intervention wherever possible.

5. At all stages the participants' informed consent must be negotiated and a spirit of reciprocity and respect amongst all parties should be established.
6. There should be respect for intellectual property of and by all parties.
7. Practitioners should ensure that the research and intervention are culturally sensitive.
8. The results of the research should be returned to the community.
9. The benefits of the research should be shared with the community.
(Drama for Life, 2008, p. 1).

Although this declaration is written in the context of Applied Theatre and Drama, it still reads well and applies to other artists, curators and research practitioners who use other artistic forms and approaches such as design, visual and musical arts for learning, development and healing purposes. Applied Theatre practices are generally inclusive of visuals and sound elements in their processes. The Ethics Declaration serves as a reminder and a point of reference for practitioners who are working in communities that are not theirs. Elizabeth Ellsworth's (1989) question to critical pedagogy will always emerge. She asks '*Why doesn't this feel empowering?*' This question will keep coming up because the nature of applied arts is to intervene in community and tackle social problems. One of my main critiques of applied arts is that we have yet to discover and develop culturally relevant approaches for African communities. These approaches should be deep-rooted in the given community's culture, meaning they should be driven by the people as suggested by contemporary scholars like Mda (1993) and Chinyowa (2009).

The university is still a hetero-patriarchal, racist, capitalist, sexist, xenophobic able-ist space like many other universities in the world (hooks, 1994; Ellsworth, 1989). This gaze has played a huge role in the way our curriculum and learning environment were designed. The language of applied drama felt good and revolutionary but was hard to actualise and for the community to use consistently. I started to wonder what applied arts looks like when it is initiated and driven by a community. How can an institution collaborate and add value to rituals that already are subsumed in the day to day lives of the people? The point here is that the process is started and managed by the community instead of the institution bringing the intervention to the people. In this sense, applied arts practitioners will consider attending to their 'homework' because artistic spaces are also often in need of interventions. This is not to say that community rituals do not construct problematic social structures like patriarchy and heteronormativity. The idea is to confront power relations and the community's own role in the production of knowledge on all levels of society.

This chapter is therefore an attempt to comment on and critique some of the contemporary applied arts practices, particularly in Namibia, and the complexities

surrounding them. My dream is to unpack and address the gap between contemporary artistic and applied arts practices. I reference indigenous creative practices to give form and shape to this debate.

This is a story I always tell
 When we got to the Wits School of the Arts
 As Drama for Life scholarly artists
 From different parts of the continent
 They asked us why we wanted to do Applied Theatre
 We had all kinds of answers
 From being passionate about community work
 To the dreams of lifelong learning and social justice
 Have you been helped?
 They asked us
 A helper needs a helper
 They said
 The value of subjectivity and keeping the self in check
 The principle of self-reflexivity
 The culture of introspection
 Became the language of our praxis

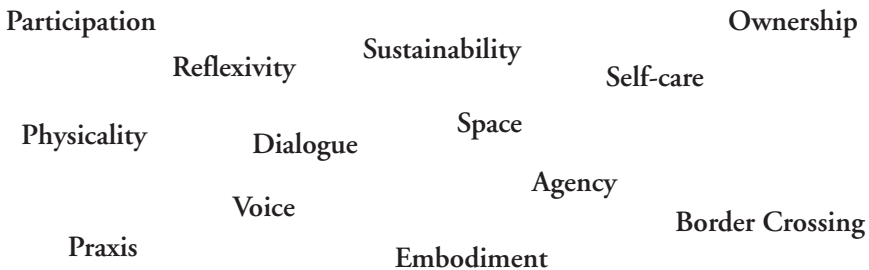
We were to be well versed in this lingua
 Which we embodied and activated
 To a certain degree
 But every now and then
 The experience did not feel empowering
 This couldn't have been praxis
 The theory failed the practice
 The university's promise was broken

Every now and then, we had to start over again
 Back to the drawing board
 From the work to the homework and back
 And again
 But the critical reflective lectures were useful though
 A messy kind of usefulness
 They revealed to us that us going to play in communities was not
 enough
 Our methodologies were largely Euro-centric
 The applied drama lingua that we adapted and rehearsed
 Proved to be partially irrelevant
 It was not enough

IS THIS THING APPLIED ARTS OR PEOPLE'S ART?

We must pose the question
Is this Applied Arts or is it People's Arts?
And does it matter?
The binary of Applied and Art
Aesthetic and Function
Community and Commercial
Traditional and Transgressive
Conventional and Cutting-edge
Process and Product

Namibia's art history is contested and fragmented. It has not only suffered erasure at the hands of racist and sexist regimes, it has also been distorted and hence hard to access. Little research has been done to map local art histories and to creatively engage with their existing archives. Although scholars have written about historical arts and cultural practices in Africa (Kerr & Chifunyise, 2004; Mans, 2017), there is a large gap in knowledge on the form and feeling of theatre, performance and arts in the Namibian context. Young and radical researchers will always be challenged when it comes to existing archives of indigenous performance and arts practices (Sylvester, 2015). The erasure that these histories have suffered at the hands of imperialist scholarships have not been adequately disrupted and confronted. Another gap that exists concerns the utilisation and engagement with African indigenous archives and activism in art and performance. Applied arts as an alternative area and approach of art has been influenced by ancient African art practices that are functional in principle. I recognise the following critical pedagogic values which are visible in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1994, 2007) discussions on the language of African Theatre.



This was our language at Drama for Life. I also recognise these values in the discourses of other critical pedagogues such as Green (1988), Giroux (1994), McLaren (1995), Freire (1997), Nyanzi (2014a & 2014b) and Shor (1996). These values are visibly central in African artistic practices which all have a fluid and intertwined relationship with the aesthetic value. The arts have always manifested through functional aspects of the community work. The visual and performance art were found in both sacred and secular rituals such as fieldwork, weddings, festivals, education, rites and healing events (Mans, 2017). My early experiences of storytelling were when stories were performed between the young and the elderly through orature and song. I still hold my childhood memories of moonlit village dances, cattle festivals, church and struggle songs very dear to me because of the aesthetic and functional values they held. These ritualised performances simultaneously engaged us on artistic, educational, therapeutic and developmental levels. The embodied approaches created room for different kinds of participation and giving voice to participants. These were usually in the form of events that were structured by the religious, family, political and other social institutions, so they did not always feel empowering. It is their performative nature in a forum that allowed us to negotiate expression while confronting social realities of the time.

The concept of *Oudano* thus becomes fundamental in giving context to applied arts as an area of work that has been influenced by indigenous arts practices from different parts of the world. *Oudano* is an Oshiwambo term that refers to a broad spectrum of performance. Its direct translation would be acts along the lines of play and performativity as theorised by contemporary performance writers such as Schechner (2006) and Amkpa (2010). The rituals from my childhood memories are all forms of *Oudano*.

Oudano is the site of my writing
 It is the fluidity between its walls
 Here, there and the in-betweens
 The infinite temporary definitive
 The virtue of bodies in places and times
 Schooling and healing through the play
 Learning through creating
 The people, workers of the land shall be the players
 Praying for land and love
 In this dream, the people generate voice
 And power is negotiated
 Through a rehearsal for the future
 In a song, a poem
 Where birds paint and elephants dance
 The people are the makers of their own knowledge

It is clear that *Oudano* is often initiated and facilitated at grassroots levels by the youth, artists, healers, women, queers and workers (Sakaria, 2014; Mans, 2017; Somé, 2010). This tells us a lot about the agency and ownership nature of *Oudano* practices. SWAPO struggle songs of the Ndilimani Cultural Troupe are a very good example of how freedom fighters used Southern African traditional and religious songs to make their own music. This music served the purpose of conscientising the masses and giving a sense of healing and education against the brutalities of the South African apartheid government (Mbenzi, 2015). As a child growing up in a newly independent Namibia, I learned political history through some of these songs. I often revisit *Oudano* praxis like these in order for new forms of performance, facilitation and curation to emerge.

A useful example here would be a project we recently facilitated called Oudano Afro Lab which was specifically targeted at the theatre and performance art practitioners. The six-week workshop engaged four emerging artists to facilitate learning around unconventional ways of making artwork. This was in response to the Namibian arts space which still upholds and relies on colonial approaches of making and learning. The question of critical transformation in the arts is hardly engaged and made use of when it comes to development of the artists and their work. It is still rare to come across local arts and culture scholarship that is fundamentally influenced by decolonial praxis. Art schools around the globe have adopted the new curatorial and performative cultures that are inherently disruptive and cutting edge with specific emphasis on the politics of body and place. The following is an extract of my critical reflection on this project which proved to be a difficult job of transformation.

This was an autoethnographic assignment
Perhaps autobiographic too
An intervention designed by artists for artists
That required a lot of commitment and trust
Openness and artistic integrity
Our solidarity as a working group was tested
There is a lot of work to do here

My role was facilitator and that of curatorial practice
Inviting professional guests from other Southern African
countries
To share how they work in body and place
The four local performers were also to share
What they were experimenting with
From what they already knew to finding the new
Right from the start of the process
We had to wait

Waiting for artistic responses to the notion
‘The storyteller as gatekeeper’
The waiting was at a cul-de-sac
Messy realizations
Fear of vulnerability and little group trust
Resisting resistance
Dodging the dealing
There was more artistic homework to attend to
The art of looking at the selves and others

Because the assignment was too personal
Especially for the four participants
Creating personal narratives while looking for vocabulary is
difficult
They were negotiating and discovering new languages of cultural
resistance
There were moments when we fought about where the process must
head to
When participants felt I lost trust in them
When they felt that I was too privileged
To be male, scholarly, curator, facilitator
So I had to take a backseat and wait
So we waited

Waiting for the disruption of binaries
Mind and body
Audience and performers
Self and other
Object and subject
Spontaneous and rehearsed
Process and product
Visuality and performativity.

There was a thread of drought, movement and cleansing rituals that could be seen in all the four works as performed in various sites around the College of the Arts main campus. The mindful use of water, oil, incense, found objects and sound created aesthetics suggesting self-healing and transformation. Nelago Shilongoh’s *Umbilical Cord* dealt with revisiting her memory of matrilineality by playing with red thread, water, religious and disruptive sound, and her childhood



Figure 12.1 Nelago Shilongoh performing *Umbilical Cord* at Oudano Afro Lab 2016. Photograph by Hildegard Titus.

clothes. Ndinomholo Ndilula's *The Last Judgement* was a play with military toys, notes and garbage around a dry fountain exploring the potential and restrictions of playfulness in a drought desert climate. In an abstract sense, Ndilula reminded us of why we need to play to give voice and work towards social justice in a society where artists are marginalised and subjected to oppressive institutions. Fellemon Ndongo's journey in *The Art of Living* showed repetitive travelling up and down a staircase while carrying a ceramic ornament. He emerges chanting about his realization of his oily body as a site of knowledge. Nikhita Winkler's movement piece *Prayer Room* was concerned with negotiating a sacred space in a public space to facilitate meditation and personal spirituality. (Taken from Mushaandja, 2017).



Figure 12.2 Performing the crossing of borders in the public space in an Oudano Afro Lab workshop. Fellemon Ndongo, Nikhita Winkler, Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja, Oupa Sibeko and Nelago Shilongoh. Photograph by Lucky Shikongo.

With objects with bodies in space
To experience crossing of borders
The borders of the theatre
Borders of the lab
Borders of the facilitator
Borders of disciplines
Borders of what it means to perform
Borders of the known
Borders of the contract
Borders of the programme
Although not entirely though
I still think we could have gone further and beyond the confusion
Because I knew the potential of each of the artist
But who says what is enough content for a show?
Did this really work?

In the reflection of participants, it seemed to have done something:

The residency was a performer's playground that allowed me the opportunity to develop my performance capacity and skill set within the frame of devised and conceptual theatre. I would recommend such a

residency for any performer who wants to step out of their comfort zone and push their talent to the extreme. We discover new opportunities when we remove the limits we set on ourselves. (Ndinomholo Ndilula, personal communication, November 15, 2016)

Prayer Room was about me fighting my battles and perhaps also the battles of those who could relate to the work. My creative process started on social media with questions related to prayer and meditation; a work that already engaged with the audience in its initial stages of becoming. I found the perfect place to stage it in one of the Oudano Afro Lab sessions, in which the piece was created. The space had all the elements in it that I envisioned in the work, and it inspired more audience engagement. I wanted Prayer Room to be real. Real experiences. Real stories. Real feelings. Real expressions. It was a therapeutic process for me, believing that as I heal others will heal too. Performing the work was very therapeutic for me – I needed a safe space to scream, fight, fall, and find my balance, and in this work I allowed myself to go through all these emotions including exhaustion that pushed real boundaries. (Nikhita Winkler, personal communication, November 15, 2016)

I was driven to the Lab to seek inspiration and motivation that could help me break away from the fear of being and doing in difference from the commonalities of what already exists in societal settings. Knowing that I was seeking presence, I took upon the patience in me to listen with an open mind, which made me become aware of life in a different light than before. Awareness of the world around us, roots of intentionality and confidence in every movement of making when using every part of our being, leading to satisfaction and freedom. (Fellemon Ndongo, personal communication, November 15, 2016)

This was a space where I could reside with questions I had on story-making and a chance for me to create new methods in my theatre devising. It was as well a reminder on the boundaries I have to push towards when making and telling stories as an artist. It is wonderful that this year again, I leave the lab with another promising piece of work *The Umbilical Cord* that I can develop and perform further. (Nelago Shilongoh, personal communication, November 15, 2016)

I was in different spaces about how this thing worked
I felt almost the same way I was feeling about Kaleni Theatre Lab in 2015

Started by Ndinomholo, Nelago, Michelle Namases and myself
Something was started but not quite finished
The nature of process

These labs are process-based spaces
 We curated them for personal and professional processing

I shared similar sentiments with Anne Hambuda's (2015) reflections on seeing Kaleni's work performed at Parliament Gardens in October 2015.

The set up allowed for the audience to have something even better than front row seats as it put you right in the centre of each story. As the second act began, the audience moved to a different place under the trees. The fourth wall wasn't really broken at any point, but was shifted so that you felt like you were right there with the character. (Hambuda, 2015)

Whenever we got lost in the processes
 I posed the question, what is your protest?
 In moments of uncertainty and repressive myths
 We asked, what is your positionality?
 In an effort to get somewhere
 The learning was always here and there
 Edgy and jumpy

It would be naïve to think that these interventions historically exist as single events. Kaleni Theatre Lab and Oudano Afro Lab were merely one wave of young millennial practitioners with decolonial language and a strong desire to map their own journeys of personal, professional and community change. I write in detail about these practices because of my roles and experiences in them. We come from a long history of revolutionary arts practices that can be backdated to varying *Oudano* practices in pre-colonial, colonial and independent Namibia. The timeless shamanic rituals of Khoesan people and the performative student protests around the country against the apartheid government are examples of ground-breaking performances in our displaced, scattered and inaccessible art history. Namibian historian and artist Memory Biwa writes thoroughly about community festivals in southern Namibia performing rituals of remembrance of the 1904–1908 Genocide (Biwa, 2012). These are examples of community-based performances that are honouring collective memory while teaching history.

I have been privileged to experience archives of some of the most prolific and socially conscious art and performances by artists like Meme Nanghili Nashima, Jackson Kaujeua, Jackson Wahengo, Tate Kwela, Rosa Namises, Mvula ya Nangolo, Jo Rogge, John Muafangejo, Setson Wahengo, Frederick Philander, Kakuya Kembale, Herman Mbamba, Sibali Kgobetsi, Tony Figueira, Ngatu, Ras Sheehama, Willie Mbuende, Silke Behrens, Nesindano Namises, Axue, Erna Chimu, Sue Beukes, Elemotho, Trixie Munyama, Julia Hango, Tuli Mekondjo, Joseph Madisia, Norman Job, the Jazz Masters and Paulina Hangara. The list is longer than this. The early work of Bricks Theatre/Platform 2000 and the Ndilimani Cultural Troupe must

never be left out of this list of artistic learning and healing archives that contemporary Namibian artists are yet to critically and creatively engage with. Bricks did not grow to become a self-sustainable entity in the new Namibia and Ndilimani became the mouthpiece for SWAPO propaganda. Bricks and Ndilimani are two examples of cultural resistance having lost its place in independent Namibia and the urgent need to reclaim its radical and effective space. The multi-dimensional work of above mentioned artists speaks of tracing that radical voice and positionality. However, all these artists have been challenged by the local arts sector that does not easily embrace otherness and radicalness.

Lest we forget
The male dominance
The people's resilience
The passion in their voices
Our cry for freedom
Meme Nanghili's feminism
The erasure of every other woman and queer
From the struggle archives
Meme Paulina Hangara's storytelling
About the days of *Ou Lokasie*
And the cry of Eenganga
For the land was never given the space
To speak from its inter-subjectivities
To mourn and heal and return to the land

My first artistic subjective creation was *Eenganga: Translations and Trance Formation* (2014) which was a performance from my MA creative research at the University of the Witwatersrand titled *The Performer as Shaman: an autoethnographic performance as research project*. In this project, I devised a site-related story concerned with how I could use my personal and cultural narratives to perform self-healing. I made use of consultations with black urban traditional healers from Katutura to create an eventful ritual performed in multiple sites in Windhoek and Johannesburg. It comprised song, movement, poetry, found objects and site. International prizewinning filmmaker Ingrid Sinclair who was a visiting research fellow in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies at the time shared these thoughts after experiencing the work at the Wits School of the Arts.

This shimmering performance plumbed the depths of what binds people together. You may wonder what I have in common with black Namibian urban traditional healers, but returning from the performance with a sense of having been healed, the link was revealed. At the start, we were asked to sit in the lobby and wait. A pure voice sang and drifted through the hard concrete spaces of the Arts Block. We were led to an open courtyard and grouped along some railings at

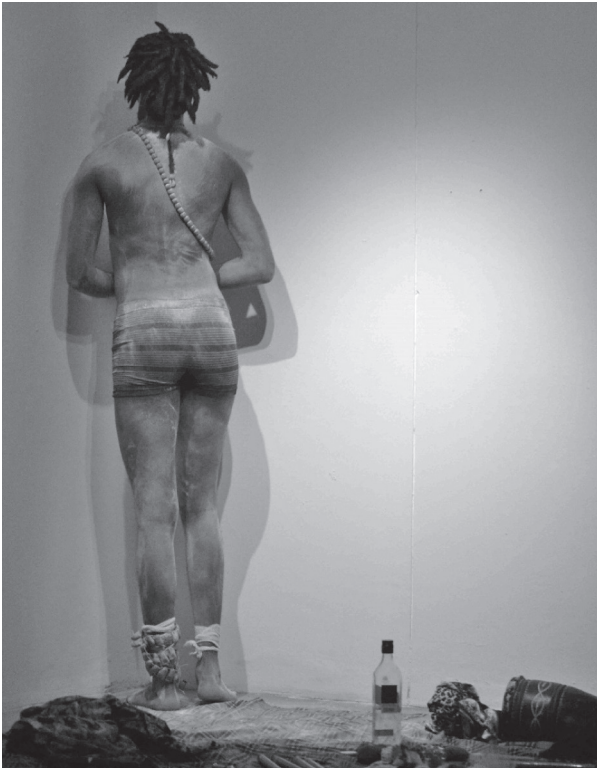


Figure 12.3
Nashilongweshipwe
Mushaandja performing
Eenganga at the
Wits School of the
Arts, University of
the Witwatersrand.
Photograph by Evans
Mathibe.

the top of a deep shaft, the sort of place where dustbins might be kept. Down there was where the singing came from. A tall man, covered with ash and wearing only a small headdress, boxers and a gourd rattle on one ankle, continued his perfect incantation. His dance and the location spoke of both healer and tramp or road sweeper. (Sinclair, 2015)

Appearing and disappearing in the distance, his near-naked body warm and alive in the grey pillars and corridors, it was sometimes only song that told us where to find him and where to go. Backed by projected images and a voice that told the poetic story of a healer's life, he finally came close, gave us lighted candles, asked us to join him in a song. Instant connection. And having drawn us into another world, his task was complete. He packed his few belongings, climbed the stairs, singing over our heads as he walked another corridor, and, as softly as he had emerged from the concrete jungle of the Arts Block, he gradually faded out. (Sinclair, 2015)

The personas that I developed from this creative research process were *The Urban Shaman*, *The Christian Pagan*, *The Queer Shaman* and *The Shamaniac* (Mushaandja,

2015) which represented the hybrid yet displaced identities of contemporary healers. They also represented the unrecognised complex role of shamanism and artist in a post-apartheid society. Autoethnographic performance is always criticised for being self-indulgent but we cannot ignore the value that exists in giving black queer artistry a voice and place to exist. Sinclair captured the essence of the work as she concluded her reflection by writing the following.

This was a rich performance. Intellectually, it displayed a deserved respect for a mystical tradition, but opening it out in such a way that we could connect with it. Sensually, the song, the spoken words, the fractured images of the everyday, the body, and the dance, together with a perfect use of site, seduced us. Spiritually and emotionally we were captivated by the simplicity and power coming from this study of traditional healers. Yet this was not a healer, it was an actor playing a healer. Performing as a healer performs and succeeding in passing that healing on to us. As a filmmaker who has filmed many performances, I realized with delight that this performance could not be captured on film. There were too many layers, each, unusually, transparent and open for inspection. A stunning piece of work that should be widely seen. (Sinclair, 2015)

Contrasting with this subjectivity, we also find ourselves having to do applied arts work in which we have to objectify our bodies to capitalist interventions in what is known today as commercial and industrial arts. I once again cite my own working experience of performing various industrial theatre processes. My research on industrial or organisational theatre in the Namibian context has shown that organisations have been recognising theatre as a human resource intervention because of its symbolic value. The reality that theatre captures and creatively transforms, serves as a metaphor for an organisational life. Organisational theatre has the power to directly portray the everyday life of an organisation which includes human interactions and conflict (Dangazele, 2010; Kaiser, 2009; Taylor & Hansen, 2005; Jøsendal & Skurholt, 2006; Zandee & Broekhuijsen, 2009).

Processes of producing industrial arts can be complex and deeply problematic, merely because of their top-down approaches. It is, for that reason, vital to understand how the processes work and what their complexities are. The management of an organisation generally commissions the work and decides what topics, themes and issues will be covered by the play which is performed theatre style (Schreyögg, 2001). If the management commissions the intervention and decides on the content of the process, to what extent will the intervention be beneficial to the employees of the organisation? This is not different from product development agencies such as Omba Trust that continuously rely on cheap labour from workers in the regions to produce craft for tourist consumption. The questions of ownership in these processes will always emerge because of the obvious exploitation here.

We are yet to witness organisational arts that are committed to the transformation of all parties involved in the intervention. The performances in industrial theatre works are largely script-bound and give no sense of agency to the employees to re-write and respond impulsively to the dialogue. The ideal organisational art practice would be one that activates artistic interventions into the everyday rituals of the organisation. It will never be enough for the National Art Gallery of Namibia to have beautifully framed artwork hanging on government office walls when the public officials also need an education about the value of the work.

My research also showed that many arts practitioners and organisations do not confront these power dynamics but they rather see organisational theatre as a tool to facilitate the quick dissemination of company information to employees of an organisation, illustrating it in a clear and easy manner. There is an obvious lack of critical engagement and commitment to decolonial philosophy for stakeholders facilitating 'development communication' in this context. Practitioners do, however, have an intention of transformation and change which is discussed above as applied arts (Sakaria, 2012).

Applied arts work is often seasonal. It is irregular. There comes a time when there is work for everyone and then, there are times when interventions are scarce. Nonetheless, applied arts are seen as a very effective economic opportunity for many artists, as compared to the mainstream theatre practice. Namibian artists prefer to do commissioned applied art work because it comes with better financial rewards. Organisations which have previously utilised applied arts are Outright Namibia, Namibia Breweries, Legal Assistance Centre, Meatco, Skorpion Zinc Mine, First National Bank, NawaLife Trust, Sister Namibia, Pick 'n Pay, Namibia Dairies, TransNamib, Old Mutual, Coca-Cola, Namdeb, Ocean Basket, and the Nawachab Gold Mine (Molapong cited in Philander, n.d; Zeeman, 2002; Republikein Online, 2007).

A local company, Ohlthaver & List, is known to be in the forefront in practising organisational theatre through its banking education system, and Freire (1997) would criticise its process. The organisation utilises organisational theatre as part of its annual training road show programme *Mwenyopaleka* which combines theatre, music and dance, to share company information with its employees across its group of companies. This company has been practising organisational theatre since 2004 and started off by consulting with South African organisational theatre practitioners until they realised that there were Namibian companies and practitioners which could offer services of the same nature and quality. Although Namibian organisations have the potential and are willing to make use of organisational theatre, they are not willing to invest in it with the necessary financial resources. There is a need to enlighten managements about the way in which the intervention works and why approaches must transform. *Mwenyopaleka* will never be enough of a rehearsal for change until such time as the Ohlthaver & List workers become the agents of their own story (Sakaria, 2012).

LOCATING CRITICAL CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

In an effort to ensure collaboration between various stakeholders, it is important to continue mapping existing and potential creative communities and experimenting with shared visions. We are seeing a wave of new critical and creative community engagements, including research. The internet and globalisation has created multiple platforms for artists, especially the young, to access new knowledge on relevant practices from different contexts. Moving on from the old and embracing a future for community engaged art, practitioners will have to work on finding ways to collaborate in order to enable learning, healing, equality and social justice.

First Rain Dance Theatre created *Anima* (2013)

Da-mâi Dance Ensemble made *The Morning* (2016)

What a suggestive and curious choreographic vocabulary

Moving

Kaleni Kollektive is collaborating with German artists through the Artistic Futures Lab

Oudano Afro Lab is developing a new festival of resistance culture for Katutura

You ask where to from here?

The theatre industry has skilful and knowledgeable artists on the learning and healing work. I cannot emphasise enough the missing link which is critical engagement. There are practitioners who have been working in applied arts for a number of years, and in fact, more theatre organisations practising applied arts have emerged. These include Township Productions, Quiet Storm Theatre, Otjiwarongo Arts Centre, John Muafangejo Art Centre, VM Born Star Productions, Committed Artists of Namibia, ChiNamibia, Ombetja ye Hinga Organisation, Misty Moons Productions, Free Your Mind, Spoken Word Namibia, to mention but a few. Most of these visible and consistent organisations are based in Windhoek which calls for decentralisation and active regional networks. This includes claiming our space in the ever-changing global discourses of applied arts.

Writers and scholars will have to maximise their practice and research and also make it visible to their communities. The University of Namibia's Visual and Performing Arts Department is not visible nor crossing borders in terms of marrying research and practice. The arts education curricula still remain detached from the grassroots communities. Higher education institutions are yet to commit themselves to decolonising their curricula and addressing their untransformed hierarchies of oppression which are projected to communities. The pending question of formal and informal training in the arts is urgent for the revolution.

There is a lack of rigorous explicit knowledge and research available on and for the Namibian arts sector, thus creating a major need for decolonised knowledge production and dissemination in different artistic areas. Also, Namibian theatre

artists work in isolation and there is a need for them to come together to share their knowledge and ideas. From the *Oudano* and *Kaleni* preliminary experiences, we have not managed to properly document and evaluate our processes. We are yet to find strategies to sustain our efforts without first and foremost relying on funding. The evaluation processes were left for individual journaling and narrative reports. Documentation, monitoring and evaluating are a significant part of our work through the lens of critical reflection.

In terms of mapping the road ahead, let us chew on the words of Veronique Mensah who is a youth activist, theatre maker, facilitator and recent graduate from Tshwane University of Technology. Her interests are in community and educational theatre with particular focus on young audiences.

In 2016 upon my return to Namibia, I registered my first production company VM Born Stars Productions cc, using theatre to work towards social change in Namibia. VM Born Stars Productions cc, starts the conversation and here we become, we break down and we build because we need to move away from observing and listening and start to do, become and be. No social change will take place unless we apply ourselves, body, mind and spirit. Be it in the education system or in our family lives, we need to apply ourselves. After touring to all 14 Regions in Namibia, I learnt that our people are hungry to become the change they hear about for so long. Realizing that it is acceptable to have a voice that matters gave me hope, I was introduced to the tools that Applied Theatre and Theatre for Development provides. But there is a certain level of segregation that is so obviously visible in our Namibian Arts industry. It reminds me of the Homelands Act of the Apartheid Regime, The Ego, Fame and an Entitlement Syndrome that has absorbed so many of us that we tend to forget that we are all cultural citizens and we have a social responsibility. It is now that we need to start talking about the real post-Apartheid industry. We need to abolish these gate keepers and acknowledge art as art and that it is worthy to be experienced. Are we only Spectators or are we willing to apply ourselves and become 'Spect-Actors'? Because no revolution will take place while you are sitting down. (V. Mensah, personal communication, June 10, 2017)

There is a song that asks where to
 Asking where to from here?
 And this is the story applied arts must write
 Where to with dismantling these walls
 To cross more borders.

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13

The development in theatre since independence: A director's perspective

Sandy Rudd interviewed by Helen Vale

The transformative power of the theatre and the living art of storytelling, have served as a motivation for Sandy Rudd's 37 years of theatre in Namibia. She concentrates her formidable source of energy into instilling a love for the theatre in a richly diverse, multicultural society and establishing the necessary means for its expression. With her wide-ranging interests in Development Theatre, Formal and Informal Productions, Deaf Theatre, Music Theatre and Special Needs Theatre, Sandy Rudd's brand of playmaking highlights the collaboration between artists and the audience. She has empowered many young Namibians to experience the magic of the theatre. Her portfolio of productions is an eclectic mix of over 120 local productions, and six international productions.

The highlights of her career were the play, *Oshi-Deutsch: The GDR Children of Namibia* in 2016 and the *25-Year Celebration of Independence in Namibia* in 2015, in the Independence Stadium, with a cast of over 1,000 participants.

A Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2010 Namibian Theatre and Film Awards, and the awards for the Best Play and the Best Director, plus 12 nominations in 2014, have crowned her career of many years as the most versatile and exuberant theatre director in Namibia.

When asked about her background, she reminisced about her birth in Zimbabwe in 1955 and the many years of travelling with her photographer father throughout Africa, experiencing the independence celebrations in Zimbabwe and Malawi. Sandy, however, believes that her greatest heritage was the development of a love of light. 'I am a disciple of light. I can spend hours looking at light patterns. I love playing with lights in the theatre and it is my favourite element of the theatre. Sometimes I wish

I could do a theatre show with all the infinite possibilities of lights and shadows, with no other incumbents such as actors.'

Moving to Namibia in 1982, Sandy attended studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM), qualifying in English and Drama for a BA degree. She believes that her experience as a student at UNAM has changed her life. Namibia was still settling down after the euphoria of achieving independence in 1990, and students were struggling with the new official language, English. Sandy maintains that her stay at UNAM not only gave her a sound education – she also gained a BA Honours degree in African Art, African Religions and Culture – she made many friends with members of the many diverse cultures of the people of Namibia. This insight into the Namibian Arts and Cultures as well as her education at UNAM, helped to guide Sandy for her first major production *The Curse of the Black Fish* in Lisbon in 1998.

Sandy was asked about the more than 50 different productions which she had directed over many years and which genres of the Musical, the Children's Theatre, the Theatre for the Deaf, Community Theatre and the Theatre for the Absurd, were her favourites. She replied without hesitation: 'My work at the College of the Arts (COTA), over 20 years, has afforded me the greatest satisfaction. The last three years have been my most rewarding and diverse! I started in 2014 with a Namibian *Meme Mia* and ended with the *Complete Works of Shakespeare, the abridged version*, a very funny take on all the works of Shakespeare. [There was also] an absurd play by Eugene Ionesco: *The Lesson*, as well as two musicals for the Môreson School learners, a nativity play for the Deaf School and a community play for Sister Namibia.'

Sandy described the travelling to a number of towns and different venues – schools, police stations, community halls, shebeens and churches – where the performances took place, and the fact that she likes to make eclectic choices and does not favour any particular genre. Her great 'trade secret' is working with both amateur and professional actors. When she works with amateurs, she raises the performance by elevating the other elements of the theatre such as lights, sound and costumes, and introduces professional actors and singers such as Lize Ehlers and Boetietjie Kavandje to inspire the amateurs. When working with professionals, no special effects are needed and they concentrate on the script and performance. Sandy enjoys many diverse components, even having added Namibian traditional, cultural dances in the first multi-cultural show, *Curse of the Black Fish*.

One of her most memorable moments was inviting a group of Jul'hoansi dancers to perform in *The Creation*, a play celebrating 20 years of Namibian independence. This was an exciting experience for both the dancers and the audience.

Another special evening was the musical, *The Lion Roars*, featuring the late Jackson Kaujeua, in the presence of his mother. Sandy remains grateful for having produced a show starring him rather than a posthumous tribute.

When asked about the major developments in Namibian theatre since independence, Sandy pointed out that theatre goers in Namibia still prefer South African plays but insisted that support for Namibian productions was growing.

She maintained that there are currently excellent Namibian practitioners who produce plays at the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN), the Space Theatre, the Warehouse and the COTA Theatre School. At the 2013–2014 Theatre Awards, 21 productions were presented for judging. This was a great advance on previous years. *Free Your Mind*, *Song Night* and *Spoken Word*⁵⁵ have stimulated a new generation to experience theatre.

In terms of themes in the new theatre, productions are now dealing with controversial, social issues such as homosexuality as in *Prime Colours* and *Revere them those Men*, rather than looking back to the horrors of apartheid. The new directors, script writers and actors are unencumbered by the burdens of history, and are educated and open-minded.

When asked whether the Government of Namibia and the private sector were giving sufficient support to Namibian theatre, actors and the arts in general, Sandy confirmed that the College of the Arts (COTA) and the National Theatre of Namibia (NTN) were doing much for the theatre and that some work was being done in the schools. There was, however, very little being done in all the 14 regions. Most of the support was given to Windhoek and too little education in the Arts was being done in the schools, although a SADC Diploma on the teaching of the Arts, to be accredited by the Namibian Qualifications Authority (NQA) was being prepared.

Sandy was then asked about the writing of her own plays, the accompanying script writing and the completion of the process to present these plays. She refers to all the elements in the theatre as being ‘illusions’ which are presented to the audience. An example is the impromptu repetition of an English sentence in a traditional language which sounds like a formal translation. As many as five different dialects can be used in a play. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, there were four different languages, including Afrikaans, on the stage.

Sandy loves to make trigger charts with colour and provocative pictures. She then builds the production on this foundation, as it may involve actors, musicians and choreographers. This often results in on-going changes, right up to the opening night of the play, e.g. in *The Lesson*, the positioning of a door as a window, at the last moment, resulted in an important change – the housekeeper standing ‘menacingly’ at the ‘window’ added to the power of her words. The plot of *Mama Mia*, adapted in *Meme Mia* to refer to the babies born during the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) assistance year, was a well-received change, whilst the shebeen setting in the *Hot Mikado* worked well.

Another item in play development, is gender sensitivity, especially for the children’s shows. A main character is usually a girl, to strengthen the position of women. Sandy says: ‘In my youth there were so few female heroes (in) films and books that I am making up for lost time!’

Namibian audiences love local reference in the productions. Sandy always tried to make reference to what was topical at that time and was funny in the streets

⁵⁵ See Chapter 8 on *Spoken Word*.

– she included the relevant commentary in the current production. The reference was presented in the local dialect and translated into English, adding great value.

When asked which of her productions she had enjoyed most, Sandy replied: ‘*Animal Farm* immediately comes to mind. It was the first really difficult play, I had attempted ... with a big wordy script and much veiled allegory that had to be presented in an approachable simple style.’ Sandy worked for a year with learners of the Ella du Plessis School and students of the COTA aged between six and 16, who had to learn to cope with English. She did not want the actors to be clumsy, masked animals, so put them all in blue overalls with the name of the animal printed on the back, using the symbol of a Namibian worker to represent the oppressed animals from the farm. The play presented a great challenge which gave Sandy the confidence to present a concept and put it across.

When asked about her special satisfaction with a play, Sandy maintained that she has always blamed herself for a long time afterwards about anything which she has felt might have been done better, and has remembered the criticisms rather than the praises. Yet she believes that her most rewarding work has been done with children. With 200 children in *Come to the Village*, she said, ‘Watching the parents watching their child perform and seeing their child blossom in the reaffirming achievement performance, is astonishing. One father was ecstatic. “Priceless” is what he said about his daughter’s performance, as he took a photograph.’

Every year for a period of five years, Sandy directed the NTN children’s plays. She feels that her greatest success has been that the plays have encouraged a new group of theatre lovers.

The play, *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco, took Sandy into a new field of the theatre, namely, the ‘absurd’. The term comes from Albert Camus’ 1942 essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* where he described the human condition as ‘meaningless and absurd’. The key element to an absurdist play is that the main characters are out of sync with the world around them and in their strangeness there is a threatening sense of change which shakes their existence to the core. Sandy described the absurd theatre as a difficult genre to work with, as it does not follow any of the usual structural norms of the conventional theatre. The challenge to staging absurd theatre is either to keep it as sane as possible, or alternatively, to maintain a kind of sanity but to be strange with a touch of menace. She was nervous about presenting such challenging theatre to the local audience, but appreciated their response. *The Lesson* was a success and won all the major theatre awards at the Namibian Theatre and Film Awards in October 2014. Sandy says: ‘The success is the shared passion from the entire cast and crew – you have to love the script and we all did.’

Sandy was asked by the Government of Namibia to direct the entertainment for the 25th Independence Anniversary celebrations at the National Stadium on 21 March 2015. The themes were Peace, Stability and Prosperity, explored through life size animal puppets and a dance performance on a sports field as stage. Sandy reported that the following team was assembled: COTA lecturers; choreography by Angie Schroeder, Trixie Munyama and Hamich Olivier; puppets by Robert

Narciso, Peter Kewowo, Helen Harris and Filemon Ndongu; sound by Jacus Krige; costumes by Cynthia Schimming and a cast of 1,000 learners with guest singers Lize Ehlers, the PDK (kwaito dance group), Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja and Big Ben. This team made a success of the production which was prepared within a month and was a triumph.

Sandy was asked about her own philosophy of the theatre and its importance to society. She questioned whether the theatre could contribute to society and even to development as outlined in the Vision 2030. She commented: ‘My personal philosophy of working and what makes me continue, is that when you believe in your own myth, you have lost the plot. You really are only as good as your last show. . . . Everything must be completed with heart and passion. The minute anything is prepared without a true sense of commitment, it will only be half done and will fail. I do not try to make anyone beholden to me. If I do something good for you, it is

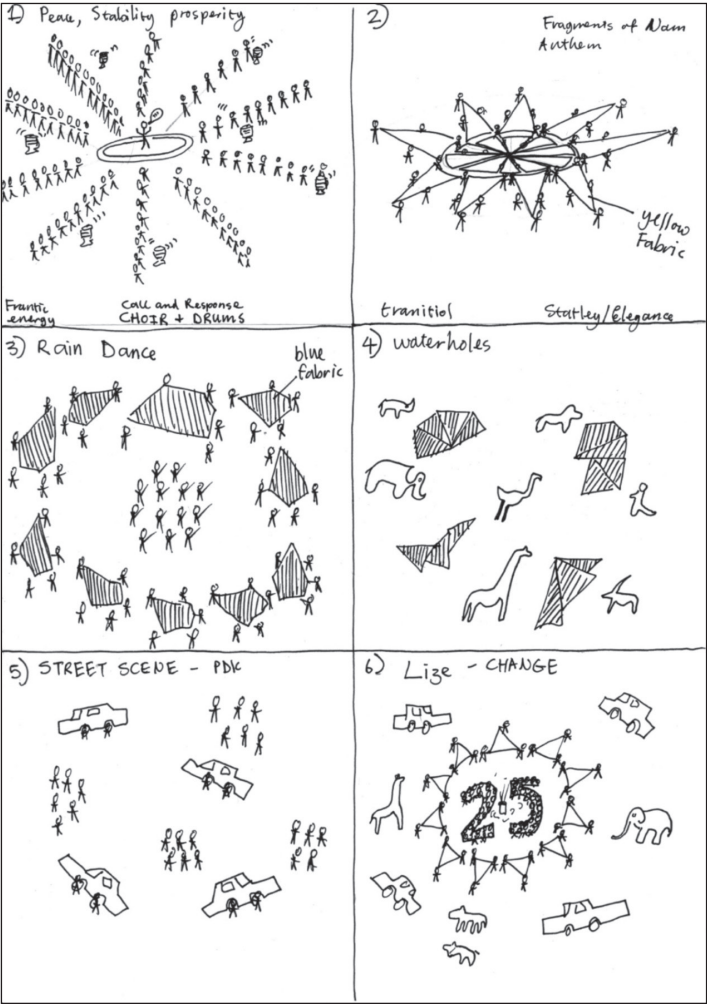


Figure 13.1
Story board for staging the show for the 25th Independence Celebrations. Illustrations by Helen Harris.

because I want to do it. I do it for me and not you. It is difficult to explain ... but where else in the world do you stand in the dark, and leap into the light?’

Sandy’s vision of 2030 is a theatre in each of the main centres of Namibia, providing ‘lots’ of work for all the enlightened actors, dancers, singers, set designers, costume designers, light and sound engineers, thus making people attend the theatre ‘for ever’.

And now? Sandy says: ‘I have had the most wonderful career in Namibia trying my hand at so many genres. I have met the most amazing people on my journey. I have not always been able to work with professional actors, but on reflection that has been my greatest joy, watching the unfolding of raw talent and seeing it blossom. ... Although I have retired from COTA, I am feeling more fierce and energetic than I ever have. I cannot imagine my life without planning and plotting and thinking of new ways of doing and telling stories. I love a good story and I love to tell it.’

Table 13.1 A selection of some of the 50 productions by Sandy Rudd, 1983 to 2016

Year	Title	What	Where
1983	There was an Old Woman	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
1984	Jungle Book	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
1986	Alice in Welwitschialand	Musical	Academy Space Theatre, Windhoek
1994	Dragon’s Breath Adventure	Musical	UNAM Space Theatre, Windhoek & Grahamstown Festival, RSA
1996	The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
	Little Shop of Horrors	Musical/horror	NTN, Windhoek
	The Curse of the Black Fish	Drama	Namibian Expo at Lisbon State Theatre, Portugal
	Talking Heads	Dramatic monologues	Grahamstown Festival, RSA
1998	Mogimotsimang	Expo cultural show	Hanover, Germany
2001	Lysistrata	Greek classical drama	NTN, Windhoek
	The Hot Mikado	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
2004	The Lion Roars	Tribute to Jackson Kaujeua	NTN, Windhoek
2006	Animal Farm	Drama	Theatre School, Windhoek
2008	Bring on the Clowns/Deaf Stories (started deaf theatre in Namibia)	Monologues	Namibian tour of 15 towns

NTN = National Theatre of Namibia

NBC = Namibian Broadcasting Corporation

Table 13.1 (continued)

Year	Title	What	Where
2009	Aladdin	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
	The Umbilical Chord	Performance poetry	Grahamstown Festival, RSA
2010	The Creation (20th Namibian independence anniversary)	Cultural dance drama	NTN & Independence Stadium, Windhoek
2011	Happy Beat (with deaf theatre cast of 260 – seven shows)	COTA musical	NTN, Windhoek
	Workshop University of Cape Town (UCT), worked with 20 San people for opening ceremony – Kalahari Peoples Network	Bleeks & Lloyd conference	UCT, RSA
	16 Days of Activism Forum Theatre, Spoken Word, Free Your Mind, Theatre Sports, Movie Night, & Media Campaign	Say NO-UNiTE	Sister Namibia, Windhoek
2012	Magic Paint Brush	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
	Come to the Village (Môreson School for Disabled Youth)	Special needs learners' production	NTN, Windhoek
2013	Meme Mia	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
	The Lesson	Drama	Theatre School, Windhoek
	16 Days of Activism	Anti-GBV production	16 shows in 16 Namibian towns
2014	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	Musical	NTN, Windhoek
	Complete Works of Shakespeare (25th anniversary of NTN)	Comedy	Theatre School, Windhoek & Omaruru Artist Trail
2015	Independence Show (25th Namibian independence anniversary)	Cultural dance drama	Independence Stadium, Windhoek
	Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat	Musical with Lize Ehlers & Amazing Kids	NTN, Windhoek
2016	The GDR Children of Namibia	Oshi-Deutsch project	Ex-GDR towns including Osnabrück, Germany & NTN, Windhoek

Total of 50 productions, six international productions (many productions were shown on NBC television)

Total audience of over 80,000 with 1,050 cast and crew.

NTN = National Theatre of Namibia

NBC = Namibian Broadcasting Corporation

14

Reading Namibian film⁵⁶

Hans-Christian Mahnke

... The secret of the Great Stories is that they have no secrets. The Great Stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. They don't deceive you with thrills and trick endings. They don't surprise you with the unforeseen. They are as familiar as the house you live in. (Arundhati Roy, Indian author and filmmaker.)⁵⁷

The word griot ... is the word for what I do and the role that the filmmaker has in society ... the griot is a messenger of one's time, a visionary and the creator of the future. ... Open your eyes, and the film is there. I want these children to understand that Africa is a land of images, not only because images of African masks revolutionized art throughout the world but as a result, simply and paradoxically, of oral tradition. Oral tradition is a tradition of images. What is said is stronger than what is written; the word addresses itself to the imagination, not the ear. Imagination creates the image and the image creates cinema, so we are in direct lineage as cinema's parents. (Djibril Diop Mambéty (1945–1998), Senegalese film director, actor, orator, composer and poet.)⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Author's note: This chapter was submitted to the editors on 22 September 2014.

⁵⁷ Roy (1997), p. 229

⁵⁸ Diop Mambéty in Thackway (2003), p. 78

INTRODUCTION

In a situation where there is only a slim collection of post-independence Namibian literature available,⁵⁹ one can argue that Namibian scriptwriters and film directors have taken up the role of adding their voice to tell Namibian stories and comment on Namibian society through the medium of film.

Among the pioneering generation of Namibian filmmakers in the early 1990s are Bridget Pickering and Richard Pakleppa, with short films such as *Uno's World* and *Sophia's Homecoming*. A younger generation of filmmakers, although already working in the industry for several years has recently emerged and are at the forefront of telling Namibian stories to Namibians and to interested international audiences alike. Filmmakers such as Joel Haikali, Oshosheni Hiveluah, Perivi Katjavivi and Tim Huebschle, have taken up the baton of the older generation and are forming part of a group of Namibians expressing themselves through the art of storytelling through film.⁶⁰

Although Namibian films such as *Uno's World* (2002), *Sophia's Homecoming* (1997), and more recently *My Beautiful Nightmare* (2012), *Cries at Night* (2009), *Rider Without A Horse* (2008), *Try* (2012) and *Tjiraa* (2012), among others, tell a fictitious story, they can nevertheless be understood equally as a Namibian 'reality' or a model thereof.

They also function as commentators of a social fabric of a society and a young nation, which is struggling to find its feet among the League of Nations and struggling with the legacies of apartheid.

The following chapter describes my own interpretation of the Namibian films and hence my description, subjective as it is, is not necessarily in line with the response of every audience or the intention of the film director.

In this chapter, I will focus only on films made by Namibian film directors. The list of films discussed below is not exhaustive. Other films have been produced in more recent years and can form part of a detailed analysis in future research. This chapter does not touch on Namibian documentaries, which portray a Namibian reality even more. The focus of this chapter is rather on fictional stories, inspired by reality, and told in fiction films.

Although there is an abundance of films which have been shot in Namibia, these are not necessarily Namibian films. Many films, mostly those which are foreign-made, have used Namibia only as a background setting, and others have been made under foreign creative control, and therefore, do not tell a Namibian story. They can, therefore, not be classified as Namibian films.

⁵⁹ I acknowledge the recent developments with emerging writers, publishing houses, etc. Nevertheless, the number of existing bookshops and of Namibian literature published and bought on the free market are not significant when it comes to the terms 'literature' and 'reading culture'.

⁶⁰ The scriptwriting profession is hardly developed and clearly needs to be cultivated in order to be noticeable. In the absence of a vast bank of scriptwriters and finished scripts, Namibian film directors frequently function as scriptwriters as well.

TELLING NAMIBIAN STORIES THROUGH FILM: A PERSONAL VIEW

Film is the ensemble, a bundle, of meaningful creative practices, including the skill of writing and literature, through which self-defined groups within or across social classes express themselves in a unique way, or locate themselves within an identifiable web of significations. Filmmaking is part of a cultural process which informs the way meanings and definitions are socially constructed and historically transformed by the people themselves.

Films, be they Namibian or not, from various directors, are distinguished in terms of differing responses to the same social, economic, and environmental conditions. Filmmaking, as part of a culture, is not a static nor even a necessarily coherent phenomenon. It is subject to change, fragmentation and reformation. As an art form, it is adaptive, offering ways of coping and making sense, and can be a strategic and capable means of mobilising the audience for political, economic and social aims.

In line with this, Namibian film can function as one of the modern cultural facilitating tools of expressing and understanding the history and society of Namibia. In order to do that, Namibian filmmakers, before entering into making a specific movie, have to ask themselves the questions what is the story about, and why is it worth telling? Any story told via film or not, must have meaningfulness. In the end, ideally, a film stimulates a debate and so brings society forward in its thinking.

In order to be meaningful, films need to affect me as a viewer. Very good films are films which affect me long after I have seen them. Films need to trigger something in me, and unlock an emotion. These emotions are usually related to a conflict which is played out on the screen. If I see a film which has a conflict in the story, it evokes my curiosity and hopefully, through the storyline, the visuals, the sound and the acting, I experience hope, fear, sadness or happiness, etc. Added to this, reading, and by this I mean, interpreting, Namibian film can help with an understanding of Namibia as a country.

One needs to understand that there is a symbiotic relationship between the making of cinema and writing about it. Film, in Namibia and elsewhere, functions as a part of the social fabric, inseparable from questions of economics, ethics, politics, and personal relationships. Namibian filmmakers should make films which create a political aesthetic which uses Namibian languages, and which reflects the process of national integration and diverse cultures of Namibia.

No one denies that objectivity hardly exists. Namibian filmmakers, like all of us, are products of their socialisation. They cannot deny a European and Western influence on their work. It is nevertheless, possible to engage the medium and therefore, fulfil local audience preferences, by using the modern art form of cinema, *and* indigenising this form of art, by telling local stories. This way a fusion of local oral traditions and Western visual art forms will take place. Namibian filmmakers are the cultural intermediaries between both forms of expression and a corresponding subjectivity.

A challenge which Namibian filmmakers face is the number of various audiences they want to reach out to. Some of the camera work focuses on scenic representations at the expense of narrative exposition and vice versa. Some films lack the production of emotion and logical continuity of the story line. Home audiences are more forgiving when it comes to these flaws, but for foreign audiences some of the Namibian films do not meet the demand for much greater texture, detail and character complexity.

Namibian filmmakers also function as griots or what used to be oral historians. Their role was that of transmitting stories of histories from one generation to the other. This intergenerational transmission or testimony was one of the fundamental features of the oral tradition. The filmmakers' role is, therefore, crucial to Namibian society, as they bridge the gap between the old and the young, and fill the vacuum of an absent storyteller in the urban areas of Namibia.

Of course, this is not a one-sided relationship. The viewer, the audience, also add meaning to what they have seen on screen. Viewers create a meaning. They filter out messages and reflect these messages to the outside world.

Whatever messages were intended by the film director, their meaning is always interpreted by the receivers in terms of their own specific frames of reference, histories, and experiences.

ADDRESSING THE COLONIAL AND APARTHEID PAST

Namibian films, and the stories they tell, function as a social narrative which brings to discussion different topics, which, if not news, are overwhelmingly present in society and yet, have not been discussed. These films, therefore, offer an interpretation beyond the news-story and a platform for dialogue within society. Yet, these cinematic indicators of social ills and challenges are incomplete and flawed without a historical consciousness.

In 2015, Namibia had been independent for 25 years, following almost 70 years of South African occupation, annexation and apartheid rule, and a brutal period of German colonial rule. As a result of this history, issues surrounding inequality, national healing, reconciliation, and post-traumatic stress and how the history of the country will be remembered and interpreted, are matters which Namibia is struggling to understand. In this regard, cultural industries, and filmmaking in particular, can play key roles in furthering the debate and raising the pertinent issues which others are shying away from. Films such as *Dead River*, *Cries at Night*, and *Rider Without a Horse*, address these topics.

Dead River

Dead River is a 34 minute short film which was directed by Tim Huebschle in 2012. The film is based on a screenplay written by Huebschle himself, based on a story by Rolf Ackermann. Set against the backdrop of apartheid in Namibia during the 1980s, the film follows an unlikely friendship between a black boy, David, the son

of a farm worker, and a white German-speaking girl, Lisa, the daughter of the farm's owner. David and Lisa meet through the melodies she plays on her flute.

Throughout the film, the melody Lisa plays is also used as a choral device at various intervals of the film. It serves as a thematic and structural bracket, returning the audience to the central theme while at the same time linking the various parts of the film together. The song is the structural thread which ties the disjointed parts of the central theme together in an entertaining way.

When Lisa's father, the disgruntled racist widower, Adolf von Dornstedt, learns about the friendship between Lisa and David, he outlaws the friendship and sends his daughter to a boarding school. Years later, yet before the end of apartheid and at the height of the struggle for independence, Lisa returns to the farm as a young woman and secretly meets David again and their bond of friendship re-emerges as if they had never been separated. As the young man is clearly engaged in the political liberation struggle, and knowing her father's racist and anti-SWAPO point of view, Lisa hands David one of her father's guns to protect himself against her father. In a face-off between the farmer and David, David fatally shoots Lisa's father in self-defence. Kept in the dark about the happening, and ridden by guilt, Lisa leaves Namibia for Europe, assuming that David had murdered her father, and guilty because she herself had handed him the murder weapon. Upon receiving a letter from a lawyer in Namibia, Lisa returns 20 years later, to a now independent Namibia. Visiting the grave of her parents, she once again meets David, who tells her what happened on the day of the fatal shooting. Seeing her error and regretting her stereotypes and wrong assumptions, the two reconcile, making peace with the war-torn history of the country and its people.

While most Namibian media coverage of racism, apartheid and colonial stereotypes takes the form of advocacy journalism about apartheid and colonialism, Huebschle seems to have wanted to approach the subject through a story driven by its characters, in order to engage Namibian audiences on issues which many see as old news, yet still shape the very existence of every Namibian until today.

The characters in *Dead River* do not exist as individuals, but as political subjects thrust between the apartheid-state conditions and social practices. They call attention to the invisible and very visible structures into which the individuals have been born and within which they had and have to live. As the film moves towards its closing, this historical setting is shifted to the current post-apartheid, independent Namibia, where the individuals have to now cope with the new space which has opened up before them and which has been created by the political landscape of post-independence Namibia, with all its contradictions inherited by the past.

The filmmakers might have wanted the film to be understood by both the former oppressor and the former oppressed. This was expected to occur as each spectator identified with specific characters and the shifting identification between them. The film functions as a reconstruction of fragments of the past, and the making of a meaningful contribution to post-apartheid cultural reconstruction.

Huebschle himself emphasises:

In a fledging film industry, it is of utmost importance to tell stories with a social relevance. ... Ghosts of the past continue to haunt us. Whereas many attempts at reconciliation have been made over the years, a certain edgy undercurrent continues to nag at our social fabric. *Dead River* is an attempt at ripping open some of these wounds that haven't healed properly, and thus make way for a more wholesome healing process. (Huebschle, 2014)

It is important to note, that Huebschle, a descendant of a German colonial *Schutztruppe* grandfather needs to locate himself in post-apartheid Namibia, a Namibia until now structured along identities and socio-economic lines of the past. Huebschle's work in this regard can be seen as an example of intercultural and intra-cultural communication.

Rider Without a Horse

The short film *Rider Without a Horse* is another film directed by Tim Huebschle and written by Tim Huebschle and Jana Brueckner in 2008. The story revolves around the *Reiter* (German for Rider) of the Rider Monument in Windhoek, one of the most prominent historical monuments of Namibia, coming to life and being confronted with his own identity. In a funny yet serious tale, the awakened *Reiter's* journey takes him through a changed world, as he stumbles upon the 18th Independence Day celebrations in the nation's capital. The *Reiter* finds himself confronted by a modern reality. He has to deal with mixed race couples, rude taxi drivers, obnoxious prostitutes and drag queens and finally the *Otrupa*, Ovaherero soldiers in German uniforms. All the *Reiter* longs for, however, is something familiar. This leads to his entanglement in an Ovaherero protest march against the signing of a Namibian-German development treaty at the Alte Feste, the old colonial fort in the capital of Namibia. While he joins the ranks of the *Otrupa*, the military formation of the Ovaherero, and the *Otrupa* pointing out the genocide and the injustices which have been committed by the German *Schutztruppe*, his experiences of the social and political realities of today, make him question what he as German colonial soldier and monument stands for. With a simple gesture of the hoisting of the Namibian flag, the *Reiter* manages to turn around the meaning of the monument and by doing this, makes a positive statement in regard to the independence of Namibia and the historical consciousness of the people who once came as oppressors and colonial settlers.

When asked about the film, Huebschle remarks:

I made the film because growing up in Namibia, the monument pretty much was a thorn in my eye. It commemorated roughly 1400 German soldiers that died in the Herero and Nama uprisings of 1904–1908. It makes no mention whatsoever of the tens of thousands of Namibians that died during the same period. I felt a film needed to be made that

would contextualise the monument in a broader Namibian context. ... The events unfolding around the Rider Monument from 2009 onwards turned my satire into a historical document. (Huebschle, 2014)

After its release in 2008/9, commentators from the critical German post-colonial sector praised the film for raising the awareness of German atrocities in its colonies and initiating a long overdue debate within the broader German public about Germany's post-colonial state. They were, however, also critical of the film for being too conciliatory and falling short of addressing the racist structures in Namibia which still existed. The reception of the film in Namibia was rather positive and pre-empted a discussion which would take place a couple of years later, when the government of the day decided at first to relocate and later remove the monument all together and replace it with a monument remembering the Namibian victims of the genocide which had been committed under German colonial rule.⁶¹

Cries at Night

Cries at Night, a 13 minute short film directed by Oshosheni Hiveluah in 2009, is another film dealing with Namibia's unresolved past, and the process of reconciliation and forgiveness.

When Lazarus' niece is involved in an accident, he meets Victor in present day Windhoek. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Lazarus knows Victor from a very distant past in pre-independent Namibia. Lazarus, a traumatised survivor of torture and imprisonment in the SWAPO dungeons, one of Namibia's most painful historical chapters, recognises in Victor his torturer and begins to follow Victor, kidnaps him and locks him in a dark cellar. Lazarus finds it hard to deal with his past, which has haunted him in his dreams ever since. For a moment, he is about to take revenge on Victor, but decides otherwise and releases the prisoner. Lazarus realises that he cannot build a future for himself and the new Namibia, free of nightmares and mental imprisonment, if he chooses to take revenge and kill his former torturer. He chooses to free himself from his trauma instead, by releasing Victor, and in doing so, enables himself to forgive and choose healing and life over death and hatred.

With this film, Hiveluah embarked upon an uncomfortable path. A few filmmakers before her had already documented some of the stories related to the detention of SWAPO dissidents in the dungeons during the liberation struggle on suspicion of being South African spies.⁶² As the topic of the SWAPO dungeons is far from finding closure,⁶³ Hiveluah must be applauded for making yet another attempt, through a fictional story, to address the unresolved matter of accepting the past, and offering healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

⁶¹ In December 2013 the monument was removed from its relocated position in front of the Alte Feste and in the meantime, a Genocide-memorial has replaced the monument.

⁶² The films I have seen are *Nda Mona*, by Richard Pakleppa (1999), *Testimony. Breaking the Wall of Silence*, by the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement (2003), and *Out of the Claws of Hell. The Story of SWAPO Detainees* (director, producer and year of release unknown).

⁶³ A good summarising overview of the topic can be found in a more recent article by Konjore (2012).

As people tell their stories in documentaries, the personal narratives in fiction films such as *Dead River*, *Rider Without a Horse* and *Cries at Night* not only provide the living memory or a lived experience of the people involved, but also supplement impersonal written histories. As such, they may in fact contradict and raise questions about the 'official version' of past events. Films also have the capacity of capturing the emotions and sentiments of the people in a very real manner which means that they can touch audiences in a deep and personal way which creates a space for dialogue and healing.

It is important that Namibia never forgets its history, not to ensure that Namibians can remain trapped in the past, but so that Namibians can learn, forgive and move on as better people. *Dead River*, *Rider Without a Horse*, and *Cries at Night* re-examine and reconstruct the past, in order to shed more light on its effect on the present. In this aspect, these three films also form part of a popular memory and a contemporary interpretation of the historical past, and as such provide a cornerstone which is to be re-examined anew by future generations. That is why films such as *Dead River*, *Cries at Night* and *Rider Without a Horse* are so important.

As a historical reference, they also highlight a certain transition taking place in Namibian society around the themes of the colonial past, apartheid and the struggle for independence and racial inclusivity. The films discussed in the next section deal with other aspects of social challenges and transition.

SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

Namibia's historic legacy of apartheid and colonialism resulted in enormous levels of socio-economic inequality, not only along racial lines, but also along lines of gender and social class. Namibian economic structures have remained largely intact since 1990 and yet Namibia has until now ranked amongst the most unequal societies in the world. Namibian film not only addresses the past and its effects on today, but most of the recently produced films also mediate the underlying racial, social, and gender roles and stereotypes, as experienced by most Namibians.

Films like *100 Bucks* and *Try*, address matters of social relevance, including poverty, violence, the divide between rich and poor, the inaccessibility of health care and many other matters. They also show a Namibia in transition, the struggle to overcome the legacies of apartheid, which manifest themselves in the economic inequalities and poverty in the Namibia of today, the problems created by rural-urban migration, and the challenges faced in harmonising and aligning urban life with tradition.

100 Bucks

100 Bucks is a 25 minute short film, written and directed by Oshosheni Hiveluah, and based on a story concept inspired by Onesmus Shimwafeni.⁶⁴ Hiveluah says of her film, that '*100 Bucks* is the one film for me that I wrote and directed that represents the Namibian society and how they relate to one another.'

⁶⁴ More about the film can be found here: <http://100bucks.tumblr.com/>

Following the journey of a 100-dollar note which passes through the hands of Windhoek residents, the film highlights the daily struggles of the protagonists. Close to reality and experienced by many urban Namibians, the film portrays social evils and phenomena such as urban poverty, unemployment, the divide between rich and poor and gender-based violence. Meant as a social commentary relevant to the home audience, Hiveluah stresses:

I was careful in the creation of the characters to create characters that Namibian audiences could relate to, identify with and understand. I wanted to shoot at locations they could recognize and I wanted them to talk the way Namibian people talk in as much as the story deals with difficult circumstances such as unemployment and domestic violence. ... (Hiveluah, 2014)

In portraying the realities and social attitudes of the average people around us, the filmmaker and writer manages to draw our attention to the prevailing social conditions. Nevertheless, this reflection of the daily struggles and living conditions can be interpreted only minimally as social criticism. The underlying root causes of such conditions are hardly addressed in the film.

Tjiraa

Tjiraa is a 12 minute short film directed by Krishka Stoffels in 2012. The screenplay was written by Toucy Tjijombo. The dialogue of the film is mainly in Otjiherero. The film follows Vezuva, a young Ovaherero woman who is returning home from her studies abroad, only to find out that her married cousin has passed away and her family's cultural practices demand her to become the wife of her late cousin's husband, although she is in love with someone else.

Tjiraa is an abbreviation for the Otjiherero word *Tjiramue* meaning 'cousin'. Culturally accepted, this practice has been a mechanism to keep family wealth within the clan and is a survival strategy in times of hardship or a protection mechanism against outsiders. It, however, forces Vezuva to enter and stay in an abusive marriage without love and affection. The story therefore implies that social and cultural practices, originally developed with a positive intention, could be misused and turned into evil practice. At the end of the film, the family members, including the mother who initially requested the marriage, see the negative implications of the cultural practice. The film shows an aspect of Vezuva's empowerment as she resists and leaves the abusive marriage, with the blessing of her parents. Social transition is evident. Cultural practices can therefore be adjusted, if necessary. In this sense, the film can be seen as a reflection of current debates taking place in the Ovaherero society, which try to harmonise traditional and modern ways of life of the Ovaherero community.

My Beautiful Nightmare

My Beautiful Nightmare is a 12 minute short film, which was written and directed by Perivi Katjavivi in 2012. The film is about Gloria, a young sex-worker, bruised

by the city and who dreams of an escape from her situation and a return to the freedom of her childhood.

The storyline is rather simple, yet not without conflict. Mirroring a social reality, Gloria spends her evenings prostituting herself out on the streets of Windhoek. A client abuses her and the experience leaves her shaken and forces her to rethink what she's doing. 'I tried to take a minimalist approach and I didn't want to have any dialogue unless it served the story and the character. I like the idea of trying to tell a story, using mostly visual elements which is what the medium is there for,' says Katjavivi (Mukaiwa, 2013).

The writer and director remarks that it was not his intent to portray a character as a direct response to colonialism and apartheid. Katjavivi positions his film and its story in a specific context with references to the post-colonial state of Africa and the challenges faced by Africans who are influenced by the West. Katjavivi (2014) says:

The intent is to build on the work of Sembene, Cisse, and others, who took on a pedagogical role in society, as well as the traditional role of wisdom keeper or griot. But, also to create an alternative to the African storytelling versus Western storytelling debate. Our stories should be concerned with building bridges between the West and Africa and acknowledging the possibilities in between.

Regardless of the intentions of the filmmaker, the film contributes to the telling of a specific Namibian reality namely gender-based violence and the paternalistic, male-dominated and often violent structure of Namibian society. Katjavivi gives a voice to the often voiceless, and he does this on his own initiative. In this lies the strength of the film. It contributes to the debates around gender and violence in Namibian society, with a voice from within that society. Women's rights organisations in Namibia, such as Sister Namibia, used the film in 2012 to highlight abuse against women and children in their campaign of 16-Days of Activism against Violence against Women.

My Beautiful Nightmare is a film of integrity – made with the intention of developing a relevant Namibian cinema, which explores, in considerable detail and with relevant nuances, the elements which make up the Namibian landscape and the people in it. After the completion of this independently produced film, Katjavivi stated that 'It was definitely a joy to shoot something like this on our time, on our own terms and I think that allowed us a certain amount of freedom and experimentation. I hope it encourages people to try more "independent" films here in Namibia, and to experiment and break boundaries' (Mukaiwa, 2013).

Try

Written by Joel Haikali and Sophie Mukenge Kabongo, *Try* is a 23 minute short film, directed by Joel Haikali. *Try*, told in a gangster-film-style fashion, is set in the capital city of Namibia and revolves around eight individuals, each representing different members of society. The film interweaves all these different social backgrounds, as

all the different characters cross one another's paths and interact with one another at some point in the story. In the end, regardless of their class and circumstances, they all end up at the same ill-equipped health facility, where it makes no difference whether one is rich or poor. The film addresses rampant poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment and the inaccessibility of proper health care systems in a Namibia, where one segment of society, which is ignorant of these realities, lives a life of abundance and meaninglessness.

Although this film is not too confrontational, it is nevertheless critical of Namibian society and touches on an understanding of class and the discourse of economic injustices. Although falling short in addressing the root causes of these injustices, as experienced in the real life of Namibia today, the film openly criticises the existing poverty in Namibia, which exists in 'a sea of riches'.⁶⁵

After its release, *The Namibian* newspaper praised the film. 'Boasting believable characters with unabashed and sometimes humorous dialogue in a tale that is sensitive and sobering with a dash of that laughter one can often find in a sad situation, Kabongo manages to tie up a dramatic multi-narrative in scenes that are both familiar and funny.'⁶⁶ Adding her own intention, co-writer Mukenge Kabongo states that *Try* 'discusses important issues and struggles that different characters representing different factions of society go through and the humanity that connects us all. In terms of inspiration, I often have diffuse ideas that are not really scripts yet but that need conversations or meeting people to become more concrete. I always hope that the characters manage to touch the audience in some way and as a result I hope of course they make you reflect' (Mukenge Kabongo, 2014). Adding to Mukenge Kabongo's statement, Haikali pointed out that he was aiming at challenging himself to make a dynamic, stylistic film, through which he could be critical in the most entertaining manner. 'I wanted to prove, like we all did this time around, that Namibian filmmakers have matured to tell their stories beautifully and visually,' (Haikali, 2014).

International reviewers such as Katarina Hedren and Aderinsola Ajao do not agree.

Joël Haikali [sic] offers a limited opportunity to get to know many of the characters other than through rough sketches of their current life situation, mainly informing us whether they are rich or poor. ... There is nothing wrong with applying the styles of other filmmakers, or strictly following the rules of a genre. Likewise nothing stops a playful filmmaker from referencing inspiring heroes and role models. In the case of Haikali's *Try*, the chase scene could have been cut straight from a gangster B-movie filmed with a shaky handheld camera. Similarly the semi-erotic encounter between the bored wife and the head-hug takes us right back to the era of the classic film noir through a sudden

⁶⁵ A newspaper, with the headline 'poverty in a sea of riches', keeps reappearing throughout the film.

⁶⁶ See Martha Mukaiwa (2012, November 30): Joel Haikali Wins Big at NFTAs, online: http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?archive_id=103049&page_type=archive_story_detail&page=572

change in the film's rhythm, a well thought out wardrobe and choice of music.⁶⁷

In their review they continue: 'Haikali is an upcoming filmmaker who is still searching for a unique voice and who is having fun in the meantime, mimicking the camera shots, gestures and manners of speech of his heroes,' (Hedren/Aderinsola, 2013).

URBAN RURAL DIVIDE

Inequality in Namibia shows itself along an urban-rural divide. Apartheid, with its homeland policy and its racist constraints to population mobility, has left particularly strong marks on the patterns of domestic migration within Namibia. The colonial endeavour of efficient rule over the native population and of extraction of their labour, has created a regime built upon a strict urban-rural divide. Ugandan Professor Mahmoud Mandami (1996) stated that 'urban power stokes the language of civil society and civil rights, the rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, whilst customary power pledged to enforce tradition' (p. 18). These dichotomies also entailed a rural-urban divide, separating rich from poor, capital from labour, accumulation from subsistence. Beyond the separation along racial and tribal groups, it also divided families along gender categories, forcing men into labour migration and women into subsistence farming, and dividing societies into urban and traditional worlds.

Most Namibian films explore urban Namibia. Very few Namibian films explore rural life or even the existing urban-rural divide. Some exceptions are *Eembwiti*, *My Father's Son*, and *Looking for Ilonga*. These films will be discussed below.

My Father's Son

My Father's Son is an 82 minute film directed and written by Joel Haikali. It tells the journey of a man, who has had to reconcile his urban reality with his traditional roots in order to find peace. Haikali, in an interview with the author, stresses that 'as Namibians we all have traditional roots which might not be as far away from us as we sometimes pretend. I think we need to know where we are from and decide what that means to us. So, overall the film is about the negotiation of identity.'⁶⁸

The film, mostly with an Oshiwambo dialogue, tells the story of two brothers. Hangula is a cattle herder in northern Namibia, who is seemingly settled and is convinced of his cultural superiority, and in his stubbornness, rejects all that comes from the city. Nghilifa, on the other hand, is a successful businessman from Windhoek and has cut all his ties to northern Namibia and the traditional ways of life. When Nghilifa returns to the village after 21 years with his 'coloured' wife

⁶⁷ Katarina Hedren & Aderinsola Ajao (2013, February 28). Sidewalk Blues, a review of *Try* by Joel Haikali. *Africiné* no. 19. In *Le Bulletin de la Fédération de la Critique Cinématographique*. FÉSPACO 2013/No. 2, online, online: <http://www.africine.org/?menu=art&no=11364>

⁶⁸ Email interview with Joel Haikali by the author, 30.5.2014.

to 'free' his brother from a 'backward life', he experiences resistance, rejection and conflicts, which force him to confront his own stereotypes and cultural identity.⁶⁹ Through the reunion of the brothers the film comically explores the tensions between the urban, town realities and traditional village realities. Recollecting the intention of the film, Haikali states:

I did not grow up in town but did move here. There was a time in which I found it more difficult to reconcile where I am from with who I am but I have come to realise that 'the where you are from' is a continuous negotiation that plays an important role in who you are. So I consider the film a personal and social commentary. (Haikali, 2014)

The film has resonated well with Namibian audiences. Through its humour, the film has tried to re-negotiate the relations between the urban world of modern Namibian life and its traditional roots.

Looking for Ilonga

The 2011 film *Looking for Ilonga* is an 18 minute short film directed by Tim Huebschle, with its screenplay written by Tim Huebschle and Nailoke Mhanda, and is based on a story by Nailoke Mhanda. The dialogue of the film is mainly in Oshiwambo.

The film's story presents the viewer with a picture of the obstacles faced by rural men and women in a day-to-day situation, from the difficulty of getting access to basic services and employment in rural areas, to the longstanding social effects of the apartheid migrant labour system and modern day rural-urban migration. Huebschle remarks:

I do think our audiences are drawn to stories they can relate to. These often are uncomfortable stories dealing with themes such as gender-based violence, racism, alcohol and HIV. But these are stories they know from their own lives and consequently they are moved, touched, struck. (Huebschle, 2014)

Visually the most striking feature of the film is the beautifully shot landscape, when Simon, the main character, leaves the rural area and travels to Windhoek to look for a job⁷⁰ in order to repay a debt which his wife owes a loan-shark. The naïve Simon takes us on a journey of a city, which he has never seen before, where he feels out of place the moment he arrives. Being robbed, rejected and chased after by the police, he has nowhere to go. His misfortunes get worse, when he is hit by a car driven by a rich woman. He wakes up in hospital, where the rich woman and his wife, dressed

⁶⁹ The third character, the 'coloured' wife, symbolises a specific section of Namibian society, as she herself symbolises a distinct socio-cultural existence in modern Namibian life, unconnected and uninformed about the ways of living in a traditional setting in northern Namibia. This is further emphasised as she can't speak Oshiwambo and only speaks Afrikaans.

⁷⁰ *Ilonga* means 'work' in Oshiwambo.

in clothes sponsored by the affluent woman, provide Simon with emotional support, overcoming the hardship of their existence, in harmony with the city's modern ways.

Eembwiti

Eembwiti is an 18 minute long film from 2011, directed by Perivi Katjavivi. The script was written by Perivi Katjavivi, Frederick Philander, Obed Emvula and Rachel Dedig, and was based on a screenplay by Rachel Dedig. *Eembwiti* is an Oshiwambo word, describing Aawambo people who were born and raised in urban settings, outside their cultural traditional structures. They are unaware or ignorant of their traditional background. Aawambo people, owing to the contract labour system, were sent away from their rural traditional setting, for long periods.

The story of *Eembwiti* begins with a family from Windhoek which travelled north to the village to visit their grandmother. The children, Tuhafeni and Rosalia, are especially disdainful and seem more interested in their iPods and cell phones than in their new rural surroundings. Upon arrival, the family is welcomed into the homestead. The children, however, struggle to communicate with their grandmother as they cannot speak her local Oshiwambo language. The family settles in and are treated to a traditional Oshiwambo meal. Tufaheni and Rosalia refuse to eat any of the food and this embarrasses their mother. Later that evening the local villagers perform a ceremony around a fire which includes dancing and drumming to welcome the guests. The parents watch the festivities, impressed and amused, yet their children are disinterested. Tuhafeni wants no part of it, while Rosalia is too busy listening to her iPod, to pay any attention.

The following morning the children are woken up by their grandmother, who is annoyed by the fact that the children are still sleeping while everyone else is up and about. The children get up and make fun of their cousin Ndamona, who they see is carrying a bucket of water on her head. When imitating their cousin by trying to balance one of their grandmother's precious pots on their heads, it drops and shatters on the ground. They then hide the broken pieces in the hope that they will not be found. It is, however, almost immediately discovered by the grandmother who agonises over why her grandchildren are so naughty, so different and unappreciative of her culture. The children meanwhile sulk under a tree, complaining about life in rural Namibia and just how long they may have to stay there. Things come to a climax when the children who are in desperate need to use the bathroom, mistake the *oshini*⁷¹ for a toilet. When the children's mother comes looking for them, she receives the shock of her life. When the grandmother discovers the unimaginable, she tells the children off and wonders whether this is the way people behave in the city. She warns the parents that they must be firm with their children and that they are too old to be so naughty. She urges the parents to teach their children about their culture and where they come from. True to her own words, the grandmother leads by example. She takes the children out into a field and gives them a lesson on

⁷¹ The *oshini* is of great importance to the Oshiwambo people for it is where their mahangu crop is pounded and stored.

how to prepare the crops for the harvest and demonstrates how one ploughs the crops and scatters the seeds. The sun sets behind them. The children mutter, but for the first time they do listen.

In the closing scene, we see the grandmother walking through her field, watching the sun go down as she sings a song calling for rain. She goes on to call out to her Lord and asks Him to help her children raise their children. 'Our children's children are lost', she says. As she sings and prays we see flashbacks of the children and the mischief they have got up to since their arrival. Yet the elderly woman has forgiven them and is now concerned with asking God to help find a way for the two generations, the two worlds, to meet each other halfway.

CONCLUSION: ENDING AND OUTLOOK

Namibian filmmakers, more than 27 years after independence, have the potential to address some of Namibia's greatest post-apartheid challenges – from addressing economic inequalities, empowerment of women, fostering of a mutual understanding among communities and the different language groups, to rewriting its own history, and building a democratic society with equal opportunities for all.

Undeniably, filmmakers face challenges including limited funding, sometimes half-hearted and ineffectual political support, the lack of cinemas and the lack of a screening culture, inadequate distribution channels, the small pool of sufficiently skilled filmmakers, cast and crew, and the need to import technical equipment from elsewhere. Given Namibia's relatively small population, the number of filmmakers in Namibia will, for the near future, remain limited as well.

Yet, Namibian filmmakers are eager to tell their Namibian stories. This happens within the unique Namibian cultural and social conventions and limitations which do not favour a very open, far-reaching and tolerant space for a discussion about social issues and challenges. Given its small population and the social formation, Namibian filmmakers and the way in which they address the given socio-economic and historically inherited issues, reflect this reality.

At times, one wishes for Namibian filmmakers and their films to treat socio-political issues more openly and in a more critical way. Some of the films which have been discussed, do not tackle the underlying social issues significantly and sufficiently. In order for filmmakers to remain viable and to meet the demands of a young democratic nation such as Namibia, one can only hope that they will dare to advance an inch forward when addressing social issues and therefore, contribute more to the democratic culture and dialogue in the country. Yet given the social context and its barriers, one cannot expect miracles or overburden the role of the filmmaker and his or her own individual stance, regarding the specific socio-political challenges.

What is striking when reading and interpreting Namibian films, is nevertheless a real concern. The filmmakers who have chosen to tell a meaningful Namibian story through the visual medium of film, need to develop their own individual creative

cinematic style. They need to do so not only for their own creative credibility but also to have a cinematic impact beyond the Namibian borders.

Filmmaking is an art form and each director, as an artist, therefore needs to be recognisable through his or her own cinematic handwriting. We, as viewers, long for Namibian film directors who can tell their Namibian story, to audiences at home and abroad, *and* be masters of their visual art form as well as be recognised in the spheres of global cinema.⁷²

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15

The Namibian novel: Reflections of an author

Brian Harlech-Jones

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by discussing two of the author's novels namely, *A Small Space* and *To Dream Again*. In particular, it focuses on why they were written, and on major themes. Next, the chapter discusses some prime characteristics of the novel as an art form, as prelude to a discussion of why writing and publishing novels is important for Namibia. Finally, there is a reflection on the difficulties facing novelists and novels in Namibia, and the prospects.

A SMALL SPACE

I have written two novels that are 'located' in Namibia, namely *A Small Space* (Harlech-Jones, 1997) and *To Dream Again* (Harlech-Jones, 2002). Why did I write them? In fact, why does any artist do what they do? No matter how much we try to explain why artists do what they do, and no matter how valid our explanations might be, we really cannot fully explain the creative impulse.

Bearing this in mind, I will try to answer the question by beginning with *A Small Space*. The novel is set in two time periods, namely the mid-19th Century and 1989. The most obvious link between the two periods is through Julianne, who is a central character in the 'modern' period of the novel. She links the two periods by being a descendant of Cornelia, who was a niece of Jan Jonker Afrikaner, a well-known

Oorlam-Afrikaner captain in mid-19th Century Namibia. However, the link is also more immediate, in that Julienne has visions in which Cornelia shares aspects of her life with her and seems to be offering her advice and direction at crucial moments. Another link between the two time periods is the fact that Cornelia's lover, James, is an ancestor of Simon, who is Julienne's lover.

These structures, links, and characters reflected the fact that I am interested in 19th Century Namibian history. One aspect that interests me is the complex interaction that took place amongst the indigenous Nama, the Oorlam, the central Ovaherero, and the European traders and missionaries. While each group and subgroup within the greater groups struggled to carve out and maintain living space and control, they also interacted with each other for mutual benefit and advantage. As I studied the period, I began to see that although some observers and commentators at the time (usually outsiders) had the illusion that Namibia (or 'Damaraland', as it was called during the 19th Century) was a place of vast, open spaces with a relatively sparse population and a lot of 'room to live', the reality was that human options were quite limited and constrained, because of the scarcity of vital resources such as water, grazing, and arable land. In addition, climatic extremes and variability, as well as the rugged and difficult terrain, also constrained the human 'space'. All these factors played major roles in shaping the nature of the interactions among the various groups and individuals, as well as in shaping human character.

In the novel, I try to portray the immensity and impressive spectacle that is the Namibian landscape.⁷³ I do this not only because of my admiration for the natural beauty of Namibia, but also because, as I said earlier, I try to juxtapose the immensity of the natural space with the limitations and constraints that are faced by the human inhabitants. For instance, as James, a trader who has just arrived from Britain, travels in an ox wagon across the desert from Walvis Bay en route to Otjimbingwe and central Namibia, we read that, 'By the middle of the third day, the mountains were visible as a flimsy blue-grey line, appearing no more substantial than the fringe of clouds above them, dwarfed and laid low by the immensity of bleached sky and space.' Then, as James wonders about what he will find in Otjimbingwe, we read, 'Thinking about its remoteness, that it was the first settlement of any size after Walvis Bay – which was itself nothing but a few huts and rudimentary sheds – brought home to him the desolation of this country, this vast abandonment of space upon which human beings set down their flimsy, superficial marks of existence.'

Quite soon, James learns that the 'human beings' are neither flimsy nor superficial. Mainly, he learns this through his relationship with Cornelia, who is not only born and bred in central Namibia, but also knows the area well because she often accompanies her uncle, Jan Jonker Afrikaner, when he and his men travel to various places. Looking to advance his interests as a trader, James tells Cornelia, 'It's a hard country. I can see that. But there's something about the space – that raises thoughts of – well, possibilities.' However, Cornelia is impatient with his preconceptions and checks his speculations, as we read in the following passage:

⁷³ For a detailed discussion on landscape as a symbol in Namibian poetry, see Chapter 9.

She stopped, threw her arms out, turned almost fully around, her dark hair swirling, and said, 'Space! Space! Cattle and land – ivory and ostrich feathers – and raw hides. And don't forget the copper. But above all – the space!' She looked up at him squarely, arms on her hips, torso thrust forward, her face flushed. 'Yes – we have those things – cattle and land – and the rest of it. But for us who live here, it isn't really space at all! Up there – yes. Light years and more, light years of space. But not down here – not for us.'

As the conversation between Cornelia and James continues, there is a passage that not only reflects some of the crucial issues of the time, but also reveals the essential tension in the relationship between these two characters from different cultures, histories, and locations:

[Cornelia says] 'Yes – that's it, isn't it? Financial means! Credit! The traders have it, and we don't.'

James said, hesitantly, uneasily, 'I never thought – ' but Cornelia was not to be stopped. She cried out, 'And the missionaries? What do they offer? Promises of a kingdom larger than this Earth – infinitely larger – where we can all secure our places, even while our space here is whittled away, cut back, hemmed in. Give us your money, trade your cattle for iron and brandy, sign away your land for wagons – and for what? A kingdom beyond this life! That's the arrangement, isn't it – when you get down to it, to the very bottom of it? That's why I say you seduce us – all of you.' She faced James, her eyes bright and fierce. She cried, 'And what about us? The truth is that we welcome it. We run after them – the things you offer us – because we have been seduced, and we can no longer live without them. And the things you offer have come to mean more to us than any small things we might create with what lies to hand.'

In the 'modern' section of the novel, there is a similar theme, with the variation that Cornelia's descendant, Julianne, is frustrated when she thinks about how apartheid and colonialism have given benefits and advantages to white people at the expense of others. She thinks about how she could say the following to Simon:

I mean being coloured. I'm a second-class citizen, remember. Rights for whites, none for blacks, and us somewhere in between, hoping for more, but scared of what we might lose.' She wanted to ask him – was on the point of doing so – what's in it for you? You're white, you're privileged, you've had the best education, you have access to capital, to resources, to networks of support sustained by others like yourself. You've always had space, you and your family and people like you – space to choose your careers, to develop them, to cultivate your interests.

In writing *A Small Space*, I was also trying to problematise the notion that any and all acts of protest or opposition against European intrusion and colonialism were nurtured in the fertile garden of Namibian nationalism. This false and simplistic view of history, which was commonly articulated during the liberation struggle, declares that Samuel Maherero was a Namibian nationalist, that Hendrik Witbooi was a Namibian nationalist, that Mandume ya Ndemufayo was a Namibian nationalist, and so on. However, this was not the case. Although they are national inspirations and people of great significance in Namibian history and culture, they were not 'Namibian nationalists'. They lived, acted, struggled, and died long before the concept developed, and to suggest otherwise, is to obscure and reduce their true significance for Namibia. It also stands in the way of Namibians understanding and appreciating the forces and impulses that made them what they are today. So, to 'problematise' the notion, I tried to show various characters acting and reacting in various ways, according to their natures and within their understanding of their own contexts and situations.

When I wrote *A Small Space*, only a few years after independence, I also wanted to problematise the 'dominant narrative' that depicted hundreds of thousands of Namibians marching in determined unison towards an inevitable and certain goal, namely nationhood and independence. For one thing, 'dominant narratives', particularly ones like this, are not the stuff from which novels are produced. For another thing, it was a false narrative, because the liberation struggle was dangerous, uncertain, sometimes divisive, authoritarian, and sometimes disputed even by those who were firmly committed to it. Seen like this in its variety and complexity, from a truer and more rounded perspective, the liberation struggle also becomes far more fruitful as the stuff of novels, because novels thrive on conflict and tension, as well as on the depiction of character, character interactions, and character development. Then too, nothing reveals and develops character more than tension, conflict, and struggle.

That, for instance, is one reason why I created the character named Saul, who went into exile to join the liberation struggle, but then became one of the 'SWAPO detainees'. Clearly, there is plenty of conflict and tension in the story of such a person, as well as in the depiction of his relationship with his former persecutors, once they are all back in Namibia in 1989 during the run-up to independence. For instance, we read this as Julianne, Saul's sister, tries to sort out her confused and stressful thoughts about her brother:

She thought, different backgrounds, different histories, past relationships, different colours – but more than that, there's this thing with Saul. It's struck deep into us, into the whole family. It's like a guilty secret – not guilt because of what Saul's done, not guilt because of a wrong-doing, not guilt because of a crime committed, but guilt because of the shame of the emotions it arouses in us – emotions of hatred, anger, desire for revenge. And then, too, there's the helplessness in the face of betrayal, the shame that goes with that.

TO DREAM AGAIN

Now I will turn to *To Dream Again*. This novel has two central characters, Kerem and Nozam. As boys, they grow up together in the same village, attend school together, and play together. At the end of their elementary schooling, both are awarded scholarships to attend the most prestigious high school in the capital city.

A third character, Sanomi, is a girl who grows up in the village with Kerem and Nozam. She and Kerem are childhood sweethearts. However, when Kerem leaves to join the liberation struggle, Sanomi and Nozam get married. It turns out to be an abusive relationship and Sanomi gets a divorce, much to Nozam's displeasure. Before long, Sanomi and Kerem become lovers and start a new life together.

In time, in spite of his material and political success, Nozam's life falls apart and finally he dies in disreputable and suspicious circumstances. Kerem plays a significant role in Nozam's political downfall by running newspaper stories about Nozam's corrupt dealings.

The geographical setting of the novel is a fictitious African country named Keretani. (Not surprisingly, most commentators note that Keretani has a lot of similarities with Namibia!) During the early part of the novel, when Kerem and Nozam are schoolboys, Keretani is passing through the last days of colonialism. A liberation struggle is under way and the colonial power has mobilised local and metropolitan troops to suppress the unrest and resistance. Also, just as in Namibia, the colonial power has created an 'internal government of national unity' to try to weaken the support for the liberation movement.

The second part of the novel depicts Keretani during the period from the eve of independence until about ten years later. At the beginning of this period, Kerem returns from exile and later becomes a journalist, while Nozam, who became a priest after his schooldays, continues his ascent within the church hierarchy. Later, he switches occupations and becomes a leading parliamentarian and minister of state in the government.

The essential conflict in the novel is between Kerem and Nozam. Kerem is born into a family of modest means (although his father is a talented wood carver), while Nozam comes from a wealthy family. At high school, both become aware of the discrimination that Africans suffer under colonialism. However, they react differently. Kerem becomes 'conscientised' and, after participating in anti-colonial activities and being detained and ill-treated, finally goes into exile to join the liberation struggle. On the other hand, Nozam counsels caution and always looks the other way, mainly because of the influence of his father, who has lucrative business dealings with the colonial authorities.

The following passage describes one of the key moments in their relationship. One day, soon after they enrol in the high school, Kerem and Nozam go into the city and sit down at a restaurant to enjoy some refreshments. Instead, the owner orders them to leave because they are black and the restaurant is reserved for 'Whites Only'. Kerem tries to reason with the owner, explaining that they are also human

beings and only want a cup of tea, but the owner becomes enraged and attacks them physically. This is what happens next (in Kerem's words):

I yelled, 'We are human beings! Don't treat us like dogs!' The man turned and struck me across the cheek with the flat of his hand. Now I was inflamed beyond reason. I picked up a chair, swung it, and threw it through the large window that fronted the restaurant. The whole pane shattered and collapsed into the restaurant. Then I pulled at the nearest tablecloth. Cutlery clattered and glasses and crockery shattered on the floor.

The man turned, took a long look at the damage, and then passed a hand over his forehead as if he was witnessing the unthinkable. Astounded at what I had done, I just stood there looking at the results of my deeds. All action was suspended for a few seconds. Then the man roared and rushed forward, hands outstretched as if he was going to throttle me. I grabbed a chair and swung it into his stomach. He yelled and fell down, hitting the paved floor with a thud.

Nozam grabbed me and hissed, 'Kerem, man, let's go!' I was in a daze of anger and passion as Nozam led me onto the sidewalk. We looked back over our shoulders. (p. 80)

From that time onwards, Kerem begins to think about discrimination, colonialism, and injustice, and about how to end the situation, while Nozam defends the status quo and accuses Kerem of being hot-headed and of being too easily influenced by others.

In exile, Kerem falls foul of the witch-hunt that is consuming the liberation movement, and is imprisoned and ill-treated by his own comrades. At the same time, in Keretani, Nozam becomes a priest and rises quickly within the hierarchy as it 'Africanises' with the approach of independence. The two meet during this period, when Nozam is a member of a church delegation that visits the detention centre to investigate the 'detainee scandal'. However, when the delegation returns to Keretani, all its members, including Nozam, publicly state that the stories about a witch-hunt within the liberation movement, are nothing but baseless propaganda.

My main reason for writing *To Dream Again*, was that I wanted to produce a novel about the liberation struggle. But how would I approach such a large and complex subject? At first, I deliberated on the concept of 'reversal of fortunes', in which, to put it simply, that which is high becomes low, and vice versa. However, that did not lead anywhere. Then, as I began to think about the many ironies that I had witnessed, heard about, and experienced during the struggle, the creative paths began to open. Searching for the essential conflict that is the central point around which a novel is constructed, and with irony in mind, I began to think about how, during the struggle, it was not always the good and decent people who prospered. In fact, the opposite was often true: as in politics in general, corrupt, greedy, and

ruthless people often come out on top. I saw that too often, in spite of its grand claims, liberation did not mean freedom from human baseness and weakness. It simply meant a change in the governing class and a widening of the political base. During this process, the characters of Kerem and Nozam, and the conflict between them, began to develop out of my acquaintance with many people who had taken part in the liberation struggle.

Kerem and Nozam are not based on actual, real-life people. Instead, their characters are amalgams of both the natures and experiences of a number of people who lived through the Namibian liberation struggle, and whose lives and fortunes followed different trajectories during the first decade of independence. In that sense, they are 'true to life'.

The essential irony in the novel is that Kerem, who is altruistic and decent, becomes the victim of the very cause that he sacrifices safety and comfort to serve, while Nozam, who is not only greedy and self-centred, but also does not commit himself until he sees which way the wind is blowing, rises to prominence within the same movement.

Once I had chosen the liberation struggle as my overall setting, there was no shortage of phases and events that I could feed into my narrative. For instance, some of the most dramatic stories from recent Namibian history are those of how people went into exile, and what happened to them there. It is amazing to think that young people would walk away from everything that they had ever known, such as family, friends, home, and education, to make hazardous and stressful journeys through unknown terrain towards an uncertain future, and all because of an ideal! 'Exile' captured my imagination and, through Kerem's reflection on the matter, I hope that I both understood and accurately portrayed something of the essence of the experience:

[Kerem thinks] We were also the people of the underground. We were deeply, deeply afraid that one day when we came up above ground, everything would have changed. We feared that there would be no place for us, in spite of all our grand plans and aspirations. Sometimes, I changed the image and thought that we were like mariners who fell overboard. We were afraid that Keretani would have sailed away from us, like a ship that leaves its castaways bobbing in its wake on a dark ocean. We'd reach out and cry towards it, but we wouldn't be noticed. The ship of state, MV Keretani, would sail onward regardless. And, worst fear of all, it wouldn't matter whether or not we were on board. It wouldn't matter at all. Things would go on just the same without us. That was our worst fear. (pp. 203–204)

A common complaint in most African countries is that the achievements during the first decades of independence have fallen far short of promises and expectations. Too often, this was caused by arrogance, greed, corruption, feelings of entitlement, nepotism, and power-lust among the members of the political class. Too often, the

people who successfully led a country to independence proved to be unsuccessful at leading a country into a decent and prosperous future. Has this also been the case in Namibia? My feeling is that it has been, to a certain extent. I should qualify that statement by saying that Namibia has not been a worse-case scenario. However, in my opinion, it has not been a best-case scenario, either. In other words, although it is much better than it was, it is not as good as it might have been.

I will allow my characters to speak for the issue; in the following passage, Kerem is discussing the situation with his old friend, Father Arbuthnoir:

[Arbuthnoir says] ‘... the wheel is at the phase where the people still want to believe that it’s going to bring them something good. Not so?’ I nodded again. Arbuthnoir asked, ‘Well?’...

‘It’s not the first time I’ve heard it.’

Arbuthnoir gave me a conspiratorial grin. ‘Not at all original, eh? Why should it be? There’s nothing original about poverty, suffering and corruption, is there? It’s just the depressing old cycle, repeated and repeated, as the same old wheel goes on turning. Huh! The politicians keep dangling hope in front of the noses of the people, and the people keep on following, because they’re desperate to believe that they’re going to get something good out of it.’ (pp. 268–269)

[Kerem adds an ironic observation] ‘And we politicians thank you, oh Lord, that the people believe that it entitles us to rule forever, because it stops them from asking questions while we feed off the milk and honey.’ (p. 270)

In the novel, I describe many events from personal experience. One of those is the scene in which the riot police attack and beat students who are protesting against colonialism and injustice. Another is the experience of the students in the detention cells, and a third is the scene in the court room. During 1987–88, I personally witnessed attacks by the riot police on students at the Academy in Windhoek, and sat in the court room while students were being interrogated. Although I did not have first-hand experience of being detained, I did have a vivid and detailed description of the experience from my older son, who was detained along with other students.

The following description, provided by Father Arbuthnoir, closely reflects an experience that I had had on the Academy campus during 1987 or 1988.

‘When the protests started, the riot police let fly with a volley of rubber bullets. One of them went humming past my left ear.’ Arbuthnoir waved a hand next to his ear. ‘It was that close, my friends. It sounded like a bumble bee.’

My father said nothing. He just shook his head disbelievingly.

I asked, 'What happened then, father?'

Arbuthnoir said, 'It was like being in the eye of a storm. People dropped to the ground. Others were running away, screaming. Teargas was drifting around. Then the *ombuza* charged. They whipped people and clubbed them with rifle butts. They cleared the whole area within about a minute.' (pp. 113–114)

To conclude my reflection on *To Dream Again*, I must admit that there were times when I almost gave up the project. The reason was that I wondered whether it was possible for me to write from the perspective of a young, African boy from a rural background, when I was from such a different social and cultural background. Was it possible for me to write convincingly and effectively from a 'black' perspective, when I was a 'white' person, and when it was so soon after the demise of apartheid? I wanted to do it, and I must have decided that I could do it, because I completed the novel. However, it is up to the reader to decide whether I was successful.

ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF THE NOVEL

To clarify what a novel is, I want to begin by asking what a novel is not. The first response, recognising the distinction between 'fiction' and 'non-fiction', is that a novel is not 'fact'. In other words, its primary concern is not to provide an account of actual, real-life events in the way that writings in non-fiction areas such as history, economics, politics, and astronomy do, to mention only a few areas. Nevertheless, actual, real-life events might be the setting for a novel: for instance, the setting of *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958) is Ibo society when it was beginning to be penetrated by colonial influences, while the setting of *The Book Thief* (Zusak, 2005) is German society during the Second World War. Similarly, in *A Small Space*, the settings are actual events from Namibian history during the mid-19th Century and 1989.

However, having a real-life or realistic setting is not a necessary condition; in fact, a successful novel might be set in an entirely imaginary world. Here, most science fiction and fantasy novels come to mind immediately. On the other hand, sometimes the setting might be 'magical realism' or 'fantasy realism' as, for instance, in Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Brink's *Devil's Valley* (1998). Whatever the case, whether the context is 'realistic', 'imaginary', or a mixture of both, the setting and its accompanying events are not the central focus of the novel, even although the novel would be impossible without them.

Secondly, the novel does not set out to clarify and/or explain how or why something, or some things, have happened in the real world, in the way that writings in history, political science, and scores of other areas do. As Herodotus states in the opening lines of *The Histories* (written between 431 and 425 BC but cited here from a 1972 edition), his purposes in writing were 'to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements of both

our own and other peoples; and more particularly to show how they came into conflict' (1972, p. 1).

To preserve the memory, to put on record, and to show how and why things have happened are primary concerns of an historian like Herodotus, but they are not the primary concerns of a novelist. If there is an 'explanation' about real-world events in a novel, it is secondary to other concerns and usually supports, but does not dominate, those concerns. For instance, Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* provides incisive insights into why traditional Ibo society began to crumble as colonialism advanced and why, at the same time, Christianity began to gain an ascendancy over traditional religion. Nevertheless, the 'explanations' in *Things Fall Apart* are secondary to the main concern of the novel, which is the tragic fate of the central character, Okonkwo.

If recording, analysing, and explaining actual events are some of the things that a novel is not, then what is a novel? Firstly, initial conflict, well depicted characters, developing tension, and carefully crafted resolution are not only some of the main features of a successful novel but, taken together, are unique to the genre. Here, I will leave aside some central features of the novel such as plot, theme, conflict, developing tension, a point of view, and a resolution and will only focus on the one feature that, above all, distinguishes a novel from all other forms of writing, except related fiction forms. This is the novel's focus on character and character development. The individual is central to the novel, in the sense that a primary characteristic of a novel is that it follows the development of a central character or characters, showing how they act upon, and are acted upon by, the context, the events, and the relationships. A good novel creates interesting and believable characters, develops them in ways that are true to type and true to life and finally, through them, leads us to greater insights and understandings. At the same time, as we develop a 'relationship' with the character/s, we experience emotions such as sympathy, affection, pity, horror, or anger that might move us to act or, at least, that might cause us to resolve to act when and where possible.

Novels are important because they have individuals at their core; because they develop our sympathy with individuals; and because they are concerned with the welfare and fate of individuals. This counters the tendency of all societies, in various degrees according to their social and political natures and structures, to submerge individuality and to encourage conformity. This is also true of contemporary Namibia for reasons that Melber (2009) analyses:

The rhetoric of liberation can be rather invasive. It has its framework set in the paradigm of victory and/or defeat, and leaves no room for empathy, not to mention grief and tears. This was possibly – and sadly so – even necessary to stand any chance of survival and ultimately become successful in 'the struggle against the Boers'. Such testimony might also offer some insight into the process of how victims, as liberators, might turn into perpetrators when in control and wielding power. They gave away their humanity and in return expected unconditional

loyalty from others to a kind of struggle, which remains an everlasting act of patriotism and service.

In contrast with authoritarian and centralising tendencies and the tendency to treat people as no more than featureless units in 'the masses', the novel insists that the individual is important. It insists that events and occurrences should, primarily, be assessed for their impacts upon the happiness and fates of individuals, not for their impacts on the state, the party, the masses, or other amorphous entities, important as those considerations might be. In this, the novel is 'democratic' and is orientated to 'human rights' – for individual opinion and choice are central to democracy, and the essence of human rights is that 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' (Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

THE VALUE OF THE NOVEL AND THE CHALLENGES OF WRITING ONE

In Namibia, the impact of the liberation struggle and the attainment of independence, significant as they were, will fade with time as older generations pass away and newer generations, who did not personally experience those events, come to maturity and take over leadership. At the same time, the Namibian Constitution, which has stood up well during the first years of independence, will become even more significant in shaping politics and society; and democratic practices and structures, together with a Bill of Fundamental Human Rights, are central to the constitution.

Novels, then, could be important vehicles for shaping the ways in which Namibians understand themselves and each other, and for influencing social and political attitudes. However, comparatively few novels have been published since 1990 in comparison to literary texts in other genres. There are a number of reasons for this: a limited market for literature because of a small population that is fragmented by language; a relatively low per capita income where books are luxuries; the lack of a general reading culture; and the difficulty of access to creative fiction in a country where there are insufficient public libraries and bookshops. These factors are expanded upon in the introduction to this volume and in other chapters. Intersecting with all these factors is the question of whether it 'pays' Namibian authors to write novels in terms of time and effort. Based on my own experience, I suspect that most Namibian novelists have earned little from their writing!

Yet, if the school curriculum specified literature by Namibian authors, at least there would be a surge in both production and competition in literature in English. Although these would be works intended for school use, it is possible that literature of good quality could emerge.

In summary, the outlook for Namibian novelists would appear to be rather challenging. To write and publish a novel takes time and determination, as well as finding a publisher and a readership. Despite these constraints, several novels have been published since independence, and this has often been because new publishers, such as New Namibia Books and Wordweaver, have made a deliberate effort to

encourage new authors.⁷⁴ When considering the novels in English published since independence, one thinks of *Troubled Waters* by Joseph Diescho (1992) *Meekulu's Children* by Kaleni Hiyalwa (2000),⁷⁵ *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* by Neshani Andreas (2001), *The Other Presence* by Sifiso Nyathi (2008), as well as my novels *A Small Space* (1997) and *To Dream Again* (2002).

In addition, there have also been novels published in Afrikaans and German.⁷⁶

The genres of poetry and drama seem to have been more popular with writers, possibly because audiences can be addressed directly during live performances⁷⁷ and because less time is needed to produce a work in these genres, than to produce a novel. Moreover, it is evident that autobiography has been a particularly popular genre both before and after independence – see *Never follow the Wolf* by Helao Shityuwete (1990), *Tears over the Deserts* by Jackson Kaujeua (1994), *Where Others Wavered* (2001) by Sam Nujoma,⁷⁸ Vinnia Ndadi's *Breaking Contract* (2009), Ellen Namhila's *The Price of Freedom* (1997), Lydia Shaketange's *Walking the Boeing 707* (2010) and *Making a Difference* by Libertina Amathila (2012),⁷⁹ among others.

In conclusion, though novels could contribute significantly to the self-understanding and identity of Namibians, under current conditions, a vibrant future is not assured.

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⁷⁵ See Chapter 16 on *Meekulu's Children*.

⁷⁶ See Chapters 18 and 21.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 8 on Spoken Word.

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16

Power at the margins: Black female agency in two Namibian novels

Netta Kornberg

INTRODUCTION

In 1986, Ndeutala Hishongwa published a novel which is often not considered to be the first English-language novel in Namibia. This landmark is usually credited to Joseph Diescho's *Born of the Sun* (1988), published two years later.⁸⁰ A number of factors may have overruled Hishongwa's chronological advantage: classification (Hishongwa's work might be considered to be a novella); Diescho's greater mastery of the English language; and the systemic habit of gendered exclusions from literary canons must be considered.

I have not introduced these two novels in order to frame a competition between them. *Born of the Sun* will not be discussed in this chapter again. I have introduced *Marrying Apartheid* this way in order to highlight the extent to which it has been erased from Namibia's literary history. Doing so allows me to raise a question relevant to both *Marrying Apartheid* and to the second novel under discussion here, Kaleni Hiyalwa's *Meekulu's Children* (2000). That question is: How do we apply analytical discourses to texts which have thus far been minimised in the literary library? We will return to this question in the conclusion.

It would be disingenuous to say that these novels have been completely ignored. They have received some scholarly attention from Heike Becker (2008) and Margie Orford (2004). I will engage with the work of each critic in more detail

⁸⁰ For a more detailed discussion on *Born of the Sun*, see Chapter 4.

while discussing the novels. Suffice to say for now that both their work models a commitment to highlighting dismissed or undermined storytelling voices and recognising the power therein.

OVERVIEW OF THE TWO NOVELS

Both *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children* take place during the Namibian struggle for liberation in the northern areas of what was then called Ovamboland. *Marrying Apartheid* tells the story of Tanga and Hango's marriage which is torn apart by the collision of migrant labour, domestic violence and collaboration with the apartheid regime. *Meekulu's Children* concerns Ketja, a young girl whose parents die at the opening of the novel and who is then raised by her Meekulu (grandmother). It narrates Ketja's coming of age whilst living within the theatre of war.

Kaleni Hiyalwa was born in Onhamunhama, a village in the Ohangwena region of northern Namibia (Hiyalwa, 2000, back cover). She spent many years in exile and was educated in Zambia and Cameroon. Hiyalwa taught at the Namibia Education Centre at the Kwanza Sul settlement in Angola. She obtained a Diploma in Journalism from the Ghana Institute of Journalism and has worked in the journalism, health and gender sectors in Ghana and Namibia. She has also published short stories and poems (Orford, 2004, p. 167). *Meekulu's Children* was published by New Namibia Books,⁸¹ an important publisher in the decade which followed independence and which later closed down.

Ndeutala Hishongwa was based in Australia when she wrote and published *Marrying Apartheid*. She was a post-graduate student at the Centre for Comparative and International Studies in Education at La Trobe University and her husband, Hadino Hishongwa, was the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) Representative for Australia and the Pacific Islands (Hishongwa, 1986). *Marrying Apartheid* was published and distributed by the Australian SWAPO Support Committee for which Hishongwa worked (Orford, 2004, p. 163). She was born in 1952 in Okalili, in north-west Namibia. She trained as a nurse and joined SWAPO in 1974 during her exile in Zambia. She was sent to Sweden to study on a scholarship before completing her PhD at La Trobe University in 1988. She has also published *Women of Namibia: The Changing Role of Namibian Women from Traditional Precolonial Times to the Present* (1983) and *The Contract Labour System and its Effects on Family and Social Life in Namibia: A Historical Perspective* (1992).

That Hishongwa addressed the contract labour system in both her fiction and non-fiction writing illustrates how central it was to South Africa's rule over Namibia. During German colonialism, Ovamboland was declared a reserve in which the black population of Namibia could be controlled (Wallace, 2011, p. 102). During the mandated era, which was controlled by an extensive and tyrannical bureaucracy and supported by oppressive legislation, reserves acted as reservoirs of male migrant labour, especially for the mines and farms in the central and southern regions

⁸¹ For more detailed discussion on Namibian publishers see Chapters 1 and 22.

(Gordon, 1977, p. 6). Namibia was also marked by intense militarisation. By the end of the 1980s, the military and police force was Namibia's largest employer and, as independence neared, Robert Gordon (1988, para. 8) theorised that the prolonged war was drastically changing Namibia's economy from an agriculture and mining based economy to 'one based on the military-state administration complex'. From the mid-1970s onwards, the war was felt mostly in the north where battles took place (Wallace, 2011, p. 279). Young men and women from this area were pushed into SWAPO's People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and the South African Defence Force (SADF) as well as into exile.

These dynamics created a social geography in which those living permanently in northern Namibia were almost entirely black women and their young children. This was a crucial dynamic of life under the South African mandate, for it meant both the systematic and haphazard creation of nearly single gender and single race communities. This comes through in the novels in subtle ways. A common concern, for example, is divisions within these societies which appear homogenous. What makes it important that we assert these novels' places in Namibian literary history, despite the difficulties of doing so, lies in this fact: the novels take place in communities which were composed almost entirely of one of the most marginalised groups of voices of the 20th Century: northern, poor, rural, black Namibian women.

TESTIMONIAL LITERATURE AND MARGINALITY IN A NAMIBIAN CONTEXT

That these pieces of fiction narrate stories from within these marginalised spaces is a key aspect through which testimonial literary theory aids an analysis of these texts. Although there is no one definition of testimonial literature, the analytical category focuses on a set of critical priorities – in our case a narrative voice, writing aesthetics, urgent activism and historical reconstruction – in relation to narratives of trauma.⁸² Testimonial texts share an emphasis on the truthfulness of the narrative, the validity of which rests on the teller(s) having witnessed at first-hand what she/he reports; an explanation of how the author has come to access the information and what they have done to amass it; methodological and rhetorical strategies for reconciling the relationship between the outsider investigator with the native informant; exasperation with the dearth of information available and the challenges of collecting more. These can be summed up as the legitimacy, presence and need of the eye witness and testifier. They share a commitment to shine 'the light of the truth' (Groth, 1995, p. 11) about Namibia which emanates from the author's point of view, as she/he acts for the reader as a testifying witness. In these texts there is the double emphasis on objectivity (the facts of the event) and subjectivity (the experience of the event).

The foundational research for this paper comes from analyses of post-Holocaust testimonial literature and *testimonio*, a label applied to many genres of literature

⁸² For a more detailed discussion on autotelic violence and trauma see Chapter 17.

in Latin America since the 1970s. These form strong bodies of testimonial literary scholarship and will be used at various points in the chapter to orient our reading.

Testimonies play an important role in texts about Namibia. It is no exaggeration to say that Namibia experienced extreme isolation during the mandated era. Indeed, the term 'iron curtain' (Lowenstein, 1962, p. 12) was used to describe the relative impenetrability of its borders as regards information and people. This began to change in the 1970s when international solidarity movements and tens of thousands of exiles forged multiple pathways of information between Namibians and non-Namibians. Even during this time, however, the country's interior remained extremely difficult to access. Globally, then, 20th Century testimonial narratives about Namibia – their confluence of individual perspectives with larger traumatic environments – presented affective proof where evidence of oppression was scarce.

Both novels in this study take place amidst these conflicts and isolation, though the context of their writing differs. That the novels have almost identical settings but divergent narratives, makes for a rich pre- and post-independence comparison. *Marrying Apartheid* was written to educate about and further the goals of Namibia's ongoing liberation struggle as led by SWAPO. *Meekulu's Children*, on the other hand, grapples with the war as a past event. According to the author, it was written 'in order to bring out the history of the people who were caught up in war' (quoted in Becker, 2008, p. 293). Though the narrative takes place during the struggle, the theme of post-war reconciliation is pervasive.

Within the context of Namibian fiction, I begin with a notion of testimonial literature that is both loose and idealised. It identifies literature which takes imaginative licence as a strategy to overcome obstacles which limit voices speaking about or from traumatic experiences. In other words, fictional testimonial literature exists at the intersection of imagination and power, where voices emerge from marginal spaces.

The subject of marginality pervades this chapter and frames its argument. As a social, economic and political position, marginality is generically defined by lack (of participation, reciprocation, capital or choice, among other things) and belonging (fulfilling a role in society by being exploited) (Germani, 1980, p. 22). In other words, marginality is taken to mean a lack of power within an exploitative system.

While I do not deny the strength of oppressive systems, I challenge the notion of total powerlessness. While the term marginality is often defined as given above, some authors have written against such ideas. Multiple works of bell hooks (1984; 1999), Elizabeth Janeway's *Powers of the Weak* (1980) and Vaclav Havel's *Power of the Powerless* (1991) are some examples. These authors seek to transform what is meant by the expressions 'weak,' 'powerless,' and 'marginal,' by identifying multiple locations of power rather than arguing for its monopoly at the centre.

For Havel, power does not only exist within organised groups, but is expressed through individual acts. Within the context of Cold War Czechoslovakia, he sought to explain how ordinary people exercised power, even in the face of overwhelming oppression. Even identifying 'dissidents' as prominent figures who challenge state power is too institutionalising a view of the power of the powerless. To him, dissent

consists not only of organised political resistance, but more often of '... those "pre-political" events and processes that provide the living humus from which genuine political change usually springs' (Havel, 1991, p. 31). The power of the powerless, for Havel, need not be directed towards the powerful for that exercise of power to matter. Rather, these pre-political acts of dissent may simply be a matter of 'living within the truth,' (Havel, 1991, p. 179) exposing the violations on which state power is based by not perpetuating its propaganda in daily life.

Elizabeth Janeway similarly re-examines what may be defined as power. Arguing that 'power is a process of human interaction' (Janeway, 1980, p. 3) and exists at all ends of that relationship, it should not be assumed to act only as a dominating force. She argues for a dynamic, creative definition of power which, when turned inwardly towards self-assertion and the self-development of individuals or groups, moves away from the 'limiting power to compel' and towards the 'liberating power to act' (Janeway, 1980, p. 87). Redefinition is both central and a precursor to the empowerment of 'the weak.' To accept a definition of total powerlessness, argues Janeway, is to be complicit with oppression.

bell hooks, feminist writer and theorist, identifies this victimising definition as a 'sexist ideology' (hooks, 1984, p. 45) which enforces images of passive and helpless women. Many of hooks' essays are at once an exercise of creative power and an exploration of systematic exploitation, particularly of women of colour. Her writing is an argument for, and example of, the fact that while the powers that be may define the boundaries in which one lives based on class, gender, race and sexuality, one can live internally 'unbounded' (hooks, 1999, p. 47), perhaps more easily so the further one is from the centre. Her metaphor of darkness is instructive: '... not darkness in any sense that is stark, bleak or empty but as a rich space of knowledge, struggle, and awakening' (hooks, 1999, p. 3).

Janeway and hooks' characterisation of power as potentially creative rather than necessarily coercive reveals great possibility in rethinking the nature of both power and marginality. While the relevance of the definition of marginality with which we began cannot be denied, it is far from complete. In its insufficiency, that definition supports the disempowerment it claims only to describe. Within the logic of coercive power, power is something to be afraid of and to be guarded against rather than something that is exerted to some degree by most human beings. While it is true that to be marginal means to belong to a society, obliged by asymmetrical binds, it also entails a degree of independence. Though it is defined by lack, the margins are also 'a rich space'. These contradictions are instructive. They tell us to be flexible.

This brief exploration of alternative meanings is not meant to coalesce into a set definition. Instead, it is a necessary expansion – if we are to engage with *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children* on their own terms. We must look for the narratives' complex constructions of their protagonists' relationships to power. To do so, power and marginality cannot be regarded as mutually exclusive. The very existence of these novels challenges simplistic formulations of marginality.

Yet the marginal positions of these novels within the literary canons bring us to Havel's insight about a worker who is demoted for unpopular ideas and a challenge with which both novels grapple: 'He could now say anything he wanted, but he could never, as a matter of principle, expect to be heard' (Havel, 1991, p. 174).

This chapter is an attempt to hear what *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children* are saying.

That marginality requires us to think malleably should flag that testimonial literature is also flexible. We must be careful, however, to make sure neither is so elastic it loses its specificity. The category of testimonial literature, for one, can be expanded so far that it may become meaningless. Further, we must not forget to emphasise the literary aspect of these narratives. That is, we must treat these stories as imaginative constructs and not accept them as 'transparent and innocent' testimonies (Detwiler & Breckenridge, 2012, p. 2).

The greatest potential pitfall of a testimonial reading is the inherent self-validating assumption in testimonial acts that it is better to testify than to keep silent, that there is a duty to remember and to transmit (Wieviorka, 2006, p. 392). It supposes that memories of trauma belong in the public sphere rather than in the private. This outlook is not necessarily shared by the texts studied here, in which the plots often depict greater trust in close interpersonal relationships than in larger social groups or the public forum. The connections between witnessing, remembering and testifying take complex forms and are not always fully resolved.

For these reasons it is important that evoking the testimonial category minimally limits the application of other analytical frameworks. Rather, it should enhance the potential for multiple readings. The category of testimonial literature provides a toolbox of concepts, ideas, propositions and patterns which can be used to understand Namibian writing in a particular and relevant way.

These issues of testimonial literature and marginality – bound together by considerations of the power of story-telling and the power to tell stories – constantly underlie my readings of these two novels. Within the context of *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children*, these themes lead to an exploration of the ways in which the models of power are created for the female protagonists. Thus these three dynamics – the complications of marginality, the tools of testimonial literature, and the specifics of the two texts – make up my inquiry into what I will be calling female power or female agency. I will explore the ways that each novel builds a model of female power and how each protagonist fulfils that model.

I have three goals in this chapter. First and foremost is the goal of better understanding *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children*. Second, it is to propose testimonial literature as a relevant analytical tool with which to read many works about Namibia and/or by Namibians. Third, it is my intention to practise an analysis of marginality which is not disempowering.

MARRYING APARTHEID: INNOCENCE AND POWER

An analytical reading of *Marrying Apartheid* must both give the novel its due and address the question of its literary merit. The book is written in imperfect English and features a bare-boned plot and simplistic characters. Yet within this disregarded story lies a sophisticated formulation of female agency which seeks to mitigate the risks of claiming power. The balance here lies not in excusing the limitations of the novel, something which it does not ask for, but in not assuming from the outset what they mean for the narrative as a whole. Analysing *Marrying Apartheid* requires us to accept that '[w]hile we may ... critique one another, respect for the significance of an individual's writing coupled with awareness of the cultural context enables us to be critically vigilant' (hooks, 1999, p. 29). We also need to understand the political context in which Hishongwa wrote, for her novel directly engages with Namibia's liberation struggle.

Marrying Apartheid is told in the third person. It tells the story of Tanga and Hango, beginning with their courtship in Onime, a northern Namibian village, and ending with their separation. At first, Hango is a contract labourer until his friend becomes a local Chief and Hango is appointed as an adviser. Chiefs here are depicted as collaborators with the apartheid regime and Hango takes advantage of his position, gaining wealth at the expense of the liberation project. Pressures bear down on him as his community recognises him as a traitor and he becomes violent with Tanga, especially as their children leave to join SWAPO in exile. Eventually, Tanga is told by her mother and brother to leave Hango, which she does. She and their one remaining son move to Walvis Bay. Hango's house is destroyed and his entourage killed one night in a SWAPO attack and though he is shot several times, he survives. He lives the rest of his days, alone and miserable.

In Margie Orford's analysis of the novel, Tanga stands at a point of confluence of national and individual violence, of public politics and private affliction, disintegrating those distinctions. This novel is unique in part because 'It is rare that domestic violence is presented as a political act, an act of war' (Orford, 2004, p. 164). For Orford, *Marrying Apartheid* is both about the trauma of such layered violence and about Tanga's process of piecing together a coherent sense of self. This is done by moving away from the cultural and social constructs of womanhood and coming into her own voice.

I agree that Tanga illustrates intersections of oppression and blurs the lines between scales of suffering. I disagree, however, that *Marrying Apartheid* is a story primarily about character development. This novel is less about Tanga's empowerment and more about exploring layers of subjugation and pinpointing the armed struggle as the route through which freedom from all oppressions will occur. My analysis here is informed by Orford's emphasis on the concept of voice. Rather than accept a simple trajectory from docile housewife to reconstituted voice, I will examine the complex assertions of Tanga's agency.

The idea of manhood which comes through in *Marrying Apartheid* is that a man is one whose laws must be obeyed, a model of coercive power which Tanga cannot access because of 'custom'. Still, Tanga's worldview, which supports the liberation struggle, is legitimated. She does not achieve this through her direct actions but through the retributive and moralising narrative which punishes Hango through SWAPO. In other words, Tanga's agency is fulfilled only through the liberation struggle. The narrative structure and voice coalesce to shape Tanga's moral outlook on the rules to which Namibia's warring society conspires to hold everyone accountable. The novel's writing aesthetics are important here. The writing style enhances *Marrying Apartheid* as a morality tale. Using testimonial literary studies, the bare-boned aesthetics can be read as part of the novel's goal of working towards socio-political change.

Throughout *Marrying Apartheid*, characters and the narrator make the link between being a man and being obeyed. The night before Tanga and Hango's wedding, for example, Tanga is anxious: 'She started imagining how tomorrow and the future as a married woman would be. She was afraid to surrender her freedom and as somebody's wife, to obey his laws and take his orders' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 19). As a wife, she is described as 'a typical house wife,' (1986, p. 25) who '... without any protest or question, obeyed her husband's orders' (1986, p. 48). When Hango is ordered to apologise to Tanga in order to lure her back home, he is emasculated: '[Hango] started crying, felt embarrassed and humiliated. He had been boasting that he would never kneel down for a woman but now Chief Nambili wanted him to kneel down for this woman' (1986, p. 54).

There is no doubt in these quotes and throughout the novel of the pattern of obedience. It is not that Hango particularly is prone to violence or that Tanga capitulates especially easily. Gender – the different social roles and behavioural controls of husband and wife – is the source of inequity. 'Custom' is repeated throughout the novel, sometimes as something to be protected, but usually as the cause of women's vulnerability to men. As we will see, Tanga never overcomes gendered restrictions, but sidesteps them through SWAPO.

This dynamic of obedience is racial as well as gendered. That the entire black population must obey white laws is consistently reiterated. Because they are black in Ovamboland, Tanga, Hango and their family are faced with three options: to be the victims of the migrant labour system, to be collaborators of the apartheid government, or to be members of the liberation movement.

Race is explicitly addressed in chapter two when Amutenya, Hango's elderly uncle, explains to Hango's children why their father is away. He tells a history of domination and resistance: of colonialism, apartheid, the liberation movement, as well as of children as hope for the future (Hishongwa, 1986, pp. 27, 32). Amutenya is unequivocal that race is the organising principle of these politics. Scenes in which Amutenya speaks to the children are crucial moments of testimony. He links a larger history of oppression to his own experience as a farm labourer. The narration tells us that this telling requires courage and, by the end, resembles a sermon. Though Amutenya is testifying to his own subjugation, there is power in his act of testimony.

Despite the legal bounds to which Amutenya is subjected by virtue of being black in mandate-era Namibia, he is still able to testify.

That Amutenya's testimony is an act of power and agency, is positioned in contrast to Tanga, who achieves neither. Tanga stands as a doubly-colonised subject and Hango, through his characterisation as one of the 'Black Boers of this country' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 63), represents the racial and gendered sources of Tanga's oppression. The novel is written in the third person, so Tanga does not have narrative power; nor does she make decisions about her role in her family or in history. Even moments where Tanga has the opportunity to exercise power, the narrative does not allow it. In this same scene with Amutenya, for example, he tells her to stop selling eggs to the Boers, to which she agrees (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 28). Her act of resistance to white rule only occurs as an acquiescence to the orders of a man. It is only when Tanga's mother finally tells her to leave Hango, after years of telling her it is her duty to stay despite the abuse, that she goes home to tell Hango she is leaving. He beats her almost to death before she is able to tell him she is leaving and he throws her out. In the hospital, Tanga is described as being '... in a terrible situation. She was a mother of six but now she was completely alone. As Tanga was incapable of deciding where she wanted to be move [sic] to, her brother chose for her' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 66). During their marriage, Tanga does not directly threaten Hango's manhood by disobeying him, yet she comes to internalise a very different moral code from what he demands. From the beginning, Tanga is vaguely sceptical of the customs which dictate gender roles and propriety. Later she vaguely wonders about the source of Hango's success. A turning point comes when Tanga's cousin tells her of Hango's corruption. Soon after, Hango brings home a gun given to him by the Boers; Tanga asks why he has it. Unlike previous confronting moments, she has a clear question this time and she recognises its importance and asks it. She soon retreats, however, as she finds that 'her many questions were just causing tension in the house' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 44).

Though externally Tanga changes very little after her cousin's visit and Hango brings home a gun, her internal questioning sharpens. The end of the novel sees the general wariness coalescing into a strong statement which Tanga tells her son and her brother after they bring news of Hango's demise: 'I knew that such a thing could happen to him one day. I told him many times but he did not want to listen to me' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 69). Throughout the novel, Tanga is not that outspoken. Rather, her hostility towards white rule and support for the liberation struggle is kept mostly to herself. It is internalised, and the narrative can act upon it only through SWAPO's attack on Hango and his compound.

Marrying Apartheid posits Tanga's vulnerability at the intersection of race and gender. That Tanga is denied agency makes sense within a broader context of black women's suspected culpability. During the border wars, the bodies of black women living in the northern combat areas were used against them and the broader liberation project. Rape and other forms of specialised torture were war tools of the South African forces, as was the destruction of homesteads (McFadden, 1984, p. 625).

Many women did act to support SWAPO fighters by giving them shelter, food and information, as well as through organisations such as the SWAPO Women's Council (Wallace, 2011, p. 282). Even if they were innocent of these official crimes, their bodies, lives, crops and homes were still threatened by and subjected to these horrors.

Being a woman, Tanga was subject not only to government control but also to male scrutiny. In a non-fiction account of the contract labour system in Namibia, Hishongwa claims that even in the men's long absences, women had to consider the consequences of their actions for their husbands (Hishongwa, 1992, p. 99). Similarly, in the context of the Tanzanian male migrant labour, the men's absence caused great anxiety over the regulation of women's behaviour (Lovett, 1996, p. 55). Consequently a greater emphasis was placed on the control of women through community institutions and a stricter implementation of customs. The proper behaviour of wives was marked by obedience and respect towards husbands. When this demonstrably broke down and creating the ideal wife was no longer regarded as possible, women were perceived to be acting as though they thought they were men.

This is a form of female agency which *Marrying Apartheid* rejects, for the narrative is deeply invested in Tanga's innocence, from which her power is derived. Though Tanga lacks the agency to make or act on her own decisions, the punishments of apartheid systems – of which Hango is both the representative and the slave – cannot be justified. She follows the rules until it nearly kills her. Tanga is thus an embodiment of apartheid injustices, an exemplar of apartheid fulfilled.

Rather than Tanga as a character, it is the retributive narrative and moralising voice which constructs a model of female power which Tanga can fulfil without enhancing the risks of perceived guilt which comes from being a black woman in a colonial context. *Marrying Apartheid* is a morality tale which is set up to teach this lesson: SWAPO will win and through that victory women will be emancipated.

The narrative voice is key, for though it speaks through no clear persona, it nonetheless intervenes. It states, for example, that '[Hango] immediately asked the Boers to give him more soldiers to protect himself against the terrorists – as he called them, but he meant freedom fighters' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 56). The narrative voice does not acquiesce to the perspectives of the characters, but upholds a voice which promotes SWAPO as liberators. The story itself is one in which SWAPO punishes Hango for his treatment of Tanga and for betraying the liberation struggle. These two crimes are intertwined in the narrative, as Tanga's persistent blamelessness enhances the sense of Hango's evil, not only towards her but towards all that he opposes.

Here lies an apparent paradox: Tanga's power lies in her innocence, and her innocence depends on her powerlessness.

The retributive structure and moralising voice are enhanced through a didactic writing style, apparent in most of the quotes already given. *Marrying Apartheid* can be described as written in simple English with frequently incorrect punctuation, a limited vocabulary, and a heavy emphasis on plot rather than on character, story or description. Even as we acknowledge *Marrying Apartheid* also as a potential piece of propaganda for SWAPO, the unsophisticated aesthetics cannot be reduced to rhetoric

(Lothe, Suleiman & Phelan, 2012, p. 4). Indeed, the attempt to purge testimonial literature of rhetoric is sometimes seen as an attempt at objectivity and is considered to be both impossible and shameful when one addresses traumatic experiences.

One multi-layered quote from *Marrying Apartheid* can expose some of the ethical complexities embedded in the text's language. Tanga observes the interaction between Hango and a white South African official, Jan van Zyl, when the latter visits Hango at their home. Tanga is at first incredulous that a white man is at their home as a friend. She cannot speak Afrikaans, but can still observe Hango's struggle to communicate with Van Zyl in the language: 'Hango too couldn't speak Afrikaans thoroughly but he could express himself better [than Tanga]. Tanga realised how Hango was struggling to search for words to make Jan van Zyl understand him well' (Hishongwa, 1986, p. 45).

This quote describes Hango's struggle with Afrikaans and uses it as further proof of both his complicity with and subordination to apartheid. Within the liberation discourse, English in pre-independence Namibia held an ethical stature opposite to that of Afrikaans (Melber, 2004, p. 76). Language here is posited as a means of communication and Hango's ethical choice has to do with whom Hango is communicating and for what purpose. He is speaking to an apartheid representative and the conversation revolves around the purchase of Van Zyl's car, to increase Hango's ownership of luxury goods.

There is extensive debate around the ethics of writing beautifully about horror within testimonial literature. Arguments exist which support aesthetic illumination as the route through which to transcend the impasse of transmitting information that is incommunicable (Ribó, 2009, p. 222). Others argue, however, that high aesthetics create a greater distance between the text and the experience it attempts to transmit and admit to a shame about describing that scale of trauma stylistically (Lothe, Suleiman & Phelan, 2012, p. 26). These debates are slightly misplaced in regard to *Marrying Apartheid*, which seems unconcerned with such controversies. They are, however, useful for formulating the ways in which ethics are embedded in writing style. If *Marrying Apartheid* is not engaged with these negotiations, it is because the ethics have more invested in the English language itself than in its aesthetics. As seen with Hango in the passage, the moral choices of this novel are related to whom the text is communicating and to what ends. Though not explicitly stated, *Marrying Apartheid* is likely geared towards an international audience as it was published and distributed through an international solidarity group. Its goal, stated in the Author's Foreword, is political emancipation (Hishongwa, 1986, pp. 1–2). As a testimonial narrative, *Marrying Apartheid* puts into relation writing aesthetics, the ethics of the storytelling and the transmission of the story (how the story spreads and survives) (Lothe, Suleiman & Phelan, 2012, p. 1). These three dynamics in *Marrying Apartheid* can be understood better by considering the novel as the particular kind of historical novel that Lewis Nkosi describes.

Nkosi (1981) claims that many African novelists do not write historical fiction, but write fiction with 'a large historical sense', novels which 'dramatized moments

in history when events have seemed to loom larger than any individual. ...' (p. 31). In these novels, of which I argue *Marrying Apartheid* to be one, individuals are not the primary fuel which push the stories forward. They are a project of myth-making, of taking historical facts as raw pieces of data and shaping them into political tales. These are also stories which do not put primacy on the fictional world they create. Within these novels there is a wilful sublimation into a larger political project, an acknowledgment that '... in the final analysis the solution does not lie with the writers themselves but with political leaders capable of taking radical decisions' (Nkosi, 1981, p. 8). This bears great resemblance to testimonial literature in Latin America, *testimonio*, which responded to urgent political crises. Much *testimonio*, as literature of trauma which intervenes in official historical narratives, negotiated elements of power, representation and truth in order to develop a socio-political conscience which could act against ongoing oppression (Detwiler & Breckenridge, 2012, p. 52). This is related to *Marrying Apartheid*'s bare-boned progression from event to event, which could be read as a testimonial feature wherein strict chronology carries the weight of realism (Lothe, Suleiman & Phelan, 2012, pp. 3 & 42). It is important that *Marrying Apartheid* is believable, for only by being regarded as a trustworthy source could it be a tool of socio-political change.

Another apparent paradox emerges: through the aesthetics' subordination to politics, the text is one through which 'the artistic became an historical fact' (Alyokhina, Samutsevich & Tolokonnikova, 2013, para. 58).

In *Marrying Apartheid*, the ethics of language and the contradictions of power and responsibility are resolved through a model of female agency which protects Tanga's innocence and *testimonio* writing aesthetics which work towards political valorisation. Together they formed a story which sought to contribute to political emancipation.

MEEKULU'S CHILDREN: FEMALE POWER OVER FEMINISED LAND

Meekulu's Children is the story of Ketja, who is a nine-year-old when the story begins in 1976 and twenty-two when it ends. She is also the narrator. Taking place in a northern village called Elombe near the border with Angola, *Meekulu's Children* is set against the background of Namibia's war of independence between fighters of PLAN, referred to as *eendume do momufitu* (soldiers of the forest), and South African troops, referred to as *omakakunya*. It is a coming of age story set in a time of war. The novel begins with the death of Ketja's parents at the hands of government soldiers and the disappearance and presumed death of her two younger siblings. She thereafter lives with her grandmother, Meekulu, and over the next thirteen years goes to school, cultivates her grandmother's land and survives the intermittent and increasingly frequent battles which take place in Elombe. During this time, Ketja's relationship with Meekulu is central and fluctuates. They are at times best friends and at others barely on speaking terms. Ketja's attitude towards *eendume do*

momufitu also fluctuates as she tries to understand the violent forces which have so deeply shaped her life and the lives of all of Elombe's inhabitants. The novel ends when the war ends in 1989. Ketja's younger brother and sister return from exile, where they had fled during the same attack that killed their parents. Meekulu dies in a hospital, the result of a vicious attack by South African forces at the end of the war. The last chapter consists of a homecoming in which Ketja takes her siblings from the reception centre where many returned exiles had been living. They go to Meekulu's homestead where they give Meekulu a proper funeral.

Though sharing *Marrying Apartheid's* setting, *Meekulu's Children* differs. One of its singular features is the absence of a central male character against which Ketja could be defined. Instead, Ketja is placed in relation to Meekulu and both are posited as embodiments of the Namibian motherland.⁸³ Here is a model of female power without males; *Meekulu's Children's* model of female agency is one which asserts female authority over feminised land. Drawing on the figure of ghosts in the novel, I argue that Ketja adopts the role of the Motherland in such a way that offers the logic of post-war reconciliation which differs from the underlying official Namibian policy and which negotiates controversies of public testimony.

Margie Orford has previously commented on the importance of the symbolic Mother in *Meekulu's Children*. She sees Ketja's personal development as a matter of taking over Meekulu's role 'as custodian of memory and symbolic mother of her family' (Orford, 2004, p. 167). From early in the novel, Meekulu names herself the mother of all Namibian children and tries to impart this relationship to Ketja. Meekulu's death, to Orford, 'marks the irrevocable rupture with the past,' but also requires of Ketja to take 'up the matrilineal thread that was severed' (p. 168) by the death of Ketja's mother at the beginning of the novel. I would add to this analysis the great importance of the land itself to Ketja's development. This is at the crux of multiple complications, for it implicates Ketja in national struggle narratives.

Becker (2008) also writes about *Meekulu's Children* in the context of Namibia's public reticence around personal struggle narratives. Becker's aim is to use *Meekulu's Children*, and the two other texts which she discusses, to perforate those silences. Becker does this in part by focusing on the author's proclaimed intentions and by summarising moments in the novel in which the narrator expresses ambivalence towards PLAN fighters. Becker is right to call *Meekulu's Children* 'a piece of imaginary writing,' (2008, p. 294) but she is more invested in the text as a factual witness which corroborates publicly-silenced elements of the liberation struggle. The literary analysis itself is not the centre of the article. This is less of a criticism of Becker's work than a divergence between her analysis and my own, one which I will elaborate on in the conclusion.

Namibia has featured as the Motherland in English-language Namibian literature at least since the 1980s. It is one of the most recurrent features in the poems of *It is no more a cry: Namibian poetry in exile* (Melber, 2004) as well as in a similar collection of poems, *Tell them of Namibia: Poems from the National Liberation Struggle*

⁸³ For a more detailed discussion of the connection of land with identity see Chapter 9.

(Mbako, 1989). The latter includes, for example, the following lines from a poem called *Exploitation in Namibia* by E. Hangula: 'No nation can tell,/ No race can account/ But I, Namibia, a mother of millions/ Witnessed that suck/ my children are human machines' (Mbako, 1989, p. 25). Other collections of poetry are rife with similar examples of gendering Namibia into a specifically maternal mould. Ketja is not initially too open towards the idea of a Motherland, with herself and Meekulu as its embodiment. In *Meekulu's Children*, the idea of a Motherland is expressed primarily by regarding Namibia's youth as the 'children of this land ... our children' (Hiyalwa, 2000, p. 56) and in one of Meekulu's prayers, as 'my children' (p. 32). This idea is first introduced to Ketja when Meekulu must explain why she supports *eendume do momufitu* and she impatiently tells an uncomprehending Ketja, '— Listen here! They are not children in that sense. I mean they are our people from homes that you know. They were born here in this land. ... My child; every child in this land is my child' (pp. 56–57).

Meekulu co-opts a symbol of Namibia the Motherland and claims it as herself, adopting a model of female power which is both maternal and stakes a claim over contested land. In so doing, she adopts lots of children — and it is important that these include the children fighting for both armies, though she is more protective of *eendume do momufitu*. Ketja does not take Meekulu's explanation seriously at first and it is only over the course of many years that she changes her perspective.

Ketja's original understanding is in part stunted by Meekulu's reluctance to tell Ketja who the soldiers are, for fear of endangering her with a full explanation. It also takes time for Ketja to see in her grandmother the power to be such a great figure. The larger issue at stake, though, is if Ketja can accept a familial relationship with and extend the limits of her loyalties into a broader nationalism that would include the people whom she understands to be the source of her trauma.

It is up to Ketja whether she takes up Meekulu's mantle and it is only at the end, after she finds her brother and sister and Meekulu dies, that she decides for sure. The end is unambiguous in this sense.

As we set off, my mind lingered on a long prayer-like thought.

—Now that there is no older person in our family above me, now that Meekulu's children have come back home, I, Ketja, at my age, will be the head of the family, the clan, and a mother to all children who survived the war — those children who are alive today ...

—There is something more exciting. Freedom is coming. Our souls, our minds and our hearts will be freed from sorrow forever. From this day, I will have a task — a very big responsibility — to show the children the resting place of their parents and relatives and where many children of Elombe are buried. There are those who have been given dignified burials, those buried in shallow graves and those whose flesh has been eaten up by vultures, leaving skeletons spreading all over the land. (Hiyalwa, 2000, p. 113)

If during her life Meekulu was a figure that could symbolically keep Namibia united during the war by neither excluding anyone from the category of her children, nor by betraying the liberation struggle by informing on *eendume do momufitu* (in other words, taking a morally absolute stance while harbouring inclusive views of belonging), then Ketja is her post-war successor. She will also accept all the children, under the auspices of survival. She sees remembering the war as key to unity, and remembering as possible through Namibia's scarred post-war landscape. Ketja, with her trauma as well as her aspirations, has accepted herself as a metonym of the Namibian Motherland and thereby achieves a model of female agency.

Gendered dimensions of Meekulu and Ketja's symbolic nationhood are reinforced by the matrilineal line through which she bequeaths the role to Ketja. Meekulu is Ketja's maternal grandmother, and though the narrator's mother dies at the beginning of the story, the reader is told of the very close relationship between Meekulu and her daughter (pp. 2–3). It is also supported by the way in which the narrative intertwines feminised characterisations of Namibian land with Ketja's development from girlhood to womanhood. Two moments stand out in this regard.

In the first instance, Meekulu is sick and a healer uses herbs and prayer. A part of the prayer is for Ketja: 'Save her [Ketja] from evils so that she becomes the mother of this next family generation! ... The gods of this land, let Ketja be one of the roots of generations of our land!' (p. 82). Here Ketja's fate is tied to a larger conflict (evils and gods) in which her motherhood lies in the balance. In the prayer, her contribution to the 'next family generation' is metaphorically tied to the vitality of the land.

This metaphor takes a literal form when Ketja gets her first period while weeding Meekulu's field (p. 63). This is a telling moment, for Ketja's first signs of physical maturity occur as she is working the land. Two related dynamics are at play when the narrative ties the fate of the land to Ketja's development: the feminisation of the land itself and an affirmation of Ketja's affinity with and authority over that land.

Female agency exists here as an altered form of authority over land. In colonial and imperial discourse, land is feminised so that it can be exploited by the male masculine conqueror. In other words, there is a paternal authority over the Motherland. By contrast, *Meekulu's Children* depicts a model of female agency without a strong male presence to usurp that power. Instead, it is a person whose developing, fertile, female body can embody the new Namibian nation in a gendered and generational way.

Ketja further makes sense in this role as both the embodiment of and authority over the Motherland, for throughout the narrative we see her individual life history reflected in the events of her village. Both have the same spiral-shaped narrative marked by a pattern of repetition as well as an increasing and self-perpetuating tension. The significant events in Ketja's life are later enlarged to the scale of the village.

The original invasion by government troops takes place in the first chapter and only Ketja's family is attacked. The second does not happen again until about half way through the novel. This time, the government troops attack not only an individual family but two important community institutions, namely the church

and the school (pp. 2 & 51). Ketja's life, which had come to be shaped by her school, now needs to be restructured, as does the life of the entire village when it is turned into a battle field. From that point onwards, clashes between *omakakunya* and *eendume do momufitu* not only intensify, but the narrative makes clear that they are self-perpetuating, that the presence of each army and the fighting between them are both the cause and effect of each other.

As in many examples of post-Holocaust works of testimony literature, the narrative is repetitive, though it is not simply circular or episodic. Rather, moments of trauma spur on others, the trauma intensifies and the consequences are felt on increasingly larger scales. This spiral-shaped narrative structure achieves what much testimonial literature aspires to convey, '... the invariable and deadly pattern of dehumanisation, persecution, and destruction that drew the lives of the victims into its vortex to crush or deform them' (Assman, 2006, p. 265).

Moreover, the two sides of the conflict are set up in a reflective relationship. In one passage, for example, Ketja describes government soldiers offering food for information and *eendume do momufitu* asking for food and information. Each claims to protect Elombe's inhabitants from the other (Hiyalwa, 2000, pp. 7–66). These equivalences are important, for while they do not exonerate the government troops of the destruction they have caused, it allows for the reconciliatory conclusion in which Ketja accepts herself as the mother of all Namibia's children no matter on which side they have fought. It is crucial that Ketja accepts all these children as survivors and not as innocents.

This is a very different idea of childhood that comes through compared to many other pieces of Namibian literature, such as the poetry mentioned above, which projects onto children romantic notions of innocence and purity. We have seen a form of this in *Marrying Apartheid*, where Tanga's innocence is achieved in part through infantilisation. In *Meekulu's Children*, however, it is through complicity and responsibility that the children of Namibia can be brought together under the protection of the Motherland, with Ketja as its embodiment.

This is also at variance with official Namibian policy on post-war reconciliation, which has been characterised by silence as opposed to acknowledgment. In the decade after independence, SWAPO emphasised the need for cooperation and has, under the auspices of minimising potential antagonism between former enemies, adopted an attitude which favours public silence outside of strictly circumscribed narratives (Leys & Saul, 2004, p. 70). *Meekulu's Children*, as a piece of testimonial literature, works in a different direction. Testimonial literature is propelled by '... a protest against death, a need to leave a trace and to ensure a legacy,' (Wieviorka, 2006, p. 388) even if that legacy takes the form of mourning.

The image of ghosts is important in this sense, as it is the most powerful articulation of loss, trauma, mystery and otherness in *Meekulu's Children* and it is associated with both sides of the conflict as well as with civilians (Hiyalwa, 2000, pp. 2, 51, 72). After the government troops burn down her church and school, Ketja describes the scene: 'The place I called my school was no more than a cemetery full

of ghosts. The buildings – the church and the school – were no more than grave monuments invaded by ghosts themselves’ (p. 51).

As a result of the trauma of this incident, Ketja falls into a mad daydream which she describes:

I was alone among ghosts from the grave and they were all walking slowly towards me. Whichever way I turned, there were many ugly things holding out their old and rotten hands towards me.

–What are you doing here, when we have all gone to the world of the dead? They repeatedly said to me.

There were strange and ugly screams in my ears.

–Come here! You have to die today or you will never die again! The ugly old creatures kept on saying.

I screamed, waking from the dream, and I could hear nothing but the echo of my voice in the wilderness. (p. 52)

The *eendume do momufitu* are similarly linked to ghosts through gossip: ‘Rumour reached our community that the children Meekulu described as the people’s children, who went into exile, were no longer human beings. Each one who went into exile was now a ghost or a mysterious thing’ (p. 72). Ketja describes further rumours which detail ceremonies that people supposedly go through as they enter exile, which endow them with supernatural powers and turn them into ghost-like creatures. After an especially frightening and disorienting encounter with *eendume do momufitu*, Ketja believes this.

These three quotes expose Elombe’s proximity to and fear of death. By linking youth in exile, dead civilians and perpetrating soldiers, different sorts of death are exposed: social, literal, and moral.

Testimonial literature constantly comes up against the limits of language to convey the experience of trauma, and fantastical elements can be used to negotiate this impasse (Lothe, Suleiman & Phelan, 2012, pp. 4–36). Ghosts in *Meekulu’s Children* help to translate the experience of Ketja’s trauma into a narrative of her survival. These are gaps, however, that will never be completely filled, which is perhaps what led Derrida to say that, ‘In order to remain testimony, it must therefore allow itself to be haunted’ (Vitale, 2011, p. 56). It is this haunting which official reconciliation policy denies and which *Meekulu’s Children* emphasises.

At the novel’s end, Ketja is not interested in turning personal memories into public testimony. The narrative is suspicious of characters who do this, such as when Tate Mbela tells the village what he saw of the death of Ketja’s parents (Hiyalwa, 2000, pp. 17–18). It is through this public telling that Ketja, Meekulu, the villagers and the reader find out what happened to her family, because Tate Mbela was there to witness it and can testify to it. This act of public testimony is overlaid by much scepticism, though not of the veracity of what is being told. Rather, the narrative

is disturbed by the fetishisation of horror which occurs in the telling (Ribó, 2009, p. 230).

Yet Ketja the Mother, as a reflection of Namibia the Motherland, is committed to domesticating traumatic history on a national scale by accepting and forgiving the complicity of Namibia's children and by speaking about and feeling the presence of those who can no longer speak and who are no longer present. This is in contrast to the official 'evasive narrative' which characterises a policy of 'reconciliation through studied silence' (Leys & Saul, 2004, p. 85 & 71).

This focus on the ghosts is not one which is easily accepted in testimonial literature. Particularly in post-Holocaust literature, there is great ambivalence about the morality and possibility of representing those whose lives were contested, whose deaths were dehumanising and who cannot represent themselves (Lothe, Suleiman & Phelan, 2012, p. 37). Ketja, for better or for worse, negotiates this moral impasse by not expressing the desire to tell the stories of the ghosts, but simply to remember their existence, the facts of their death and Namibian land as the signifier of their having lived. *Meekulu's Children* does not offer a model reconciliatory policy to implement, but rather describes a logic of reconciliation centred on keeping alive a sense of loss.

Ketja can implement this logic through her appropriation of authority over Namibian land from a tradition of male conquest, bequeathed to her through her matrilineal line. The spiral narrative structure – which sets up a reflective, reiterative and enlarging relationship between Ketja and Elombe – propels Ketja into her role as the mother of all Namibia's surviving children with a model of female power over feminised land.

CONCLUSION

Both *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children* construct narratives in which power is derived from marginality as well as through internal and external struggle. That the protagonists of each novel are poor, black, rural women caught up in a theatre of war within a colonial context makes them vulnerable, but the authors turn these vulnerabilities into strengths. In *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children*, being poor, black, rural women trapped in a theatre of war under colonial rule is the source of Tanga and Ketja's moral and symbolic authority. This is not achieved through inversion, but through complex narrative structures and voices which mobilise this intangible power into material consequences. In the end Tanga is safe while Hango is alone and Ketja returns with the funeral procession to her village where she will begin to rebuild her extended post-war family.

Testimony works in different ways in each novel. *Marrying Apartheid* activates a type of testimonial which one might find in a trial. It is meant to testify to the guilt of the apartheid regime and its collaborators, and speaks in terms of clear-cut perpetrators and victims. *Meekulu's Children*, on the other hand, mobilises testimony in a way which highlights absences and silences. Both novels share a common project

of linking testimony to responsibility at the time of their publication. In both novels we see the ambiguity of fictional testimonial literature. Testimonial literature stands at the crux of Big History and small history, memory and document, fact and fiction. It uses all these things to create something which is none of them.

I began this chapter by asking a question: How do we apply analytical discourses to texts which have thus far been minimised in the literary library?

I can give no definitive answer, but offer strategies that have shaped my own investigation. This chapter has been dominated by the decision to put the texts at the centre of their own analysis. This means, firstly, treating the novels as pieces of literature and not carrying on the habit of treating English-language Namibian fiction (especially from the 20th Century) overwhelmingly as social documents. Secondly, the analysis is not motivated by canonisation (i.e. moving the texts to the centre of literary validation), although this may be a consequence. It also means that these novels have not been subsumed as supporting texts into other arguments. The aim has been to understand *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children* on their own terms first.

One consequence of these strategies has been a restrained critical voice. I find, for example, elements of both novels' constructions of female agency problematic. But it has not been my aim to either manipulate what I have read into a more acceptable model, nor to condemn them for what I find objectionable. This may seem a redundant point, but for texts around which no debate is assured, it is worth making a conscious effort at balanced critical engagement. Perhaps the need for this restraint, and the other strategies described above, will change as engagement with these texts is enlivened.

None of these strategies deny context or exclude the possibility of multiple interpretations. I am not arguing for apolitical readings or for considering art only for art's sake. Rather, I refer to my earlier discussions in which I touched on the possibilities of creative power. Working towards creative power means both believing that creative productions, such as fiction, can be powerful, and that power itself may be subjected to creative reimagining. Putting *Marrying Apartheid* and *Meekulu's Children* at the centre of their own analysis is carried out in the belief that these texts – as their authors have written them, as an audience reads them, and critics analyse them – have the potential to be practices of creative power.

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Autotelic violence: An analysis of selected Namibian short stories in Elizabeth |Khaxas' *We Must Choose Life*

Juliet S. Pasi and Nelson Mlambo

INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse and other violent acts on women and children have become a perennial problem because of their increase and prevalence in Namibia. Sadly, despite the different intervention programmes by the Namibian authorities, this chapter notes that there is still a great silence on sexual and sexuality issues. This chapter is an exploration of the selected stories from the anthology *We Must Choose Life* which bring out the shocking violence in various communities of Namibia and the stories show how this violence directly or indirectly contributes to children and women becoming infected with HIV and AIDS. Most of the writers in the anthology show that some traditional customs and cultures have deprived women and children of their basic human rights and dignity. According to Nunuhe (2014), well over 1200 men and 240 women have been murdered between 2009–2013 in gender-based violence cases which were recorded with the police. On average, 204 men and 48 women were murdered each year as victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and most alarmingly, the actual number of murders in the period under review comes to 1,565 when juveniles are included in the GBV cases. Nunuhe (2014) further posits that the figure excludes the people who lost their lives through other murderous acts that are not linked to GBV. Moreover, the GBV cases of grievous bodily harm

are frightening in that an average of 10,066 people, that is 3,489 women and 6,577 men, were recorded as victims for each year between 2009 and 2013. Rape is also prevalent with no significant reduction in the annual cases of rape, with an average 631 women and 73 men raped every year in those years. These are statistics from the Namibian Police on GBV, with the police citing 'gender inequality [as] the root cause of gender-based violence,' among the challenges associated with GBV. Violence therefore is a subject of high importance in the Namibian context and it is important that this issue be tackled from various perspectives. The literary dimension is presented in this chapter.

The contention here is that the usual reasons discussed, explain the external causes of violence and fail to address the 'most "disturbing" of all: a violence for the sake of itself, without morality, extrinsic meaning, but purely destructive' (Argenti & Schramm, 2012, p. 120). Hence, this chapter foregrounds that treating violence as a symptom is not adequately convincing. The stories unravel symptoms such as patriarchal dominance on one hand and on the other, women's and children's submission, deprivation, poverty, ignorance, disease and susceptibility to violence and abuse. In this regard, the Minister of Gender and Equality and Child Welfare at the time, Marlene Mungunda, in her foreword to *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, writes:

We politicians tend to focus on the big picture: the strategies to overcome our colonial legacy, generalisations to speed up national development and, when it comes to women and children, policies and legal frameworks to achieve gender equality and the protection of children. There is no doubt that much has been accomplished since independence and that the big picture has changed dramatically for the better. But it is also true that those changes have not reached everybody. In some cases they have not been radical enough, when only radical ones would have sufficed. (Khaxas, 2005, p. ix)

Clearly, the mundane societal issues connected to violence have not been addressed fully and have been subsumed under the bigger issues which are political. The political factors are categorised in this chapter under the extrinsic causes of sexual violence. These stories, narrated by Namibian women, advocate for transformation at the grassroots level, in the family and the local community, and thus this ought to be a source of justification to explore the intrinsic causal paths as well.

The anthologies also reveal how the women and children are de-oracised in all sorts of ways, even after eighteen years of independence. Thus, this chapter has arisen from the recognition that literature enables people to see through the lens of others. It becomes a looking glass into the world which provides a gateway to teach the readers about life-experiences from even the saddest stories to the most joyful ones which will touch their hearts. The stories from the anthology, *We Must Choose Life* are therefore an attempt to represent not only Namibian but also African womanhood from a female perspective. They challenge the unfair cultural systems

which relegate women and children to marginal roles, providing more reasons for victimising them. This chapter will argue that focusing on the external causes of violence ‘leaves something essential to violence itself unsaid’ (Argenti & Schramm, 2010, p. 121). In fact, protecting the black woman and girl child is central to the promotion of a peaceful and non-violent society and therefore, both the external and internal causal paths should be fully explored.

In explaining the external causes of violence, the stories from *We Must Choose Life* portray women and girls who break the silence on the ‘unsayables’, recognising the humiliation, degradation and pain which they experience in different conventional feminine situations. The thrust in this chapter is the misuse of culture and tradition in hurting, abusing and humiliating women and children. The discussion will take cognisance of the fact that the elements of negative attitudes, beliefs and practices – defended by the so-called advocates who ‘preserve culture and tradition’ – must be challenged and interrogated. It also examines the many reasons regarding the increase in the number of women and girls being infected with HIV, including the de-oracisation or culture of silence which surrounds sex and sexuality in Namibia. It will, however, argue that there is a need to explain all there is to violence by transcending these external factors and examining the internal factors as well.

DEFINING VIOLENCE

Violence against girls is far reaching and affects millions of girls even before they are born. This chapter mainly focuses on the sexual violence against girl children and the impact of such violence. Studies show that both boys and girls are sexually and physically abused, but that girls have a much greater chance of being sexually abused. The dominance of the male over the female in society, leaves the girl child in a vulnerable position where the females are considered to be the weaker sex.

Before analysing the different ways in which the girl child is abused and fragmented in the short stories in *We Must Choose Life*, it is important that the notion ‘violence’ be defined in the context of this chapter. This is because some scholars have argued that ‘violence is a slippery object [that covers] a plethora of things, actions mostly, being ill-definable’ (Stanko as cited in Schinkel, 2010, p. 3). In other words, it cannot be captured as a whole and thus defies a single definition because of its multi-faceted and fluid nature. Schinkel uses the term ‘liquidation’ (p. 4) to illustrate this fluid nature of violence. He contends that the ‘liquidation of violence ... entails the critique of absolute definitions and theories of violence that claim to capture violence as a whole’ (Schinkel, 2010, p. 3). He advocates for a definition that transcends a holistic and solid definition of violence. For instance, Riches (1986, p. 8) defines violence as ‘an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses.’ This definition is rather restrictive as it focuses on physical harm and negates other forms of violence (Schinkel, 2010). Norman Denzin as cited in Schinkel (2010),

further defines violence as 'the attempt to regain, through the use of emotional and physical force, something that has been lost.' (p. 36). Although the definition accommodates the use of both physical and emotional force, it is limited in the sense that it assumes that for violence to take place, something has to be 'lost' and then 'regained'. This might not be the case in all instances. Clearly, violence is not a single and homogenous entity and as such it is defined in diverse ways by different scholars. Schinkel's perspective of 'liquidation,' is thus justified as it questions absolutism in any definition of the notion of violence.

For the purposes of this chapter, Galtung's definition of structural violence will be adopted. Galtung (as cited in Schinkel, 2010, p. 37) defines violence as, '*the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual*, between what could have been and what is' (emphasis in original). Galtung's definition is broader and more inclusive and embraces the extended concept of violence that constitutes an inflation of the meaning of violence (p. 39). This definition emphasises the fluid nature of violence and not just the causes. In other words, the fluid use of the word violence allows us to distinguish between different forms of women's victimisation, their meaning and causes. Thus, structural violence does not perceive violence as an act or a singular package but embraces the different forms of violence; physical, emotional and sexual as processes, with no clearly defined beginning and end. It is also a sociological perspective of violence that perceives violence as a 'form of violence in its own right ... and cannot be traced back to one or more individuals ... but derives its momentum from the relative autonomy of the structure' (p. 41). Galtung's definition of violence thus makes a clear distinction between the agencies of violence, that is, the personal or structural agents. He also refers to structural violence as a 'social injustice' and claims that its ideal is peace (p. 39). In addition, Galtung claims that violence can be functional in society; as indicative of society at large and 'it is a vehicle of social cohesion' (p. 120). This chapter will thus adopt this all-encompassing definition to examine the myriad forms of violence and the meaning of violence as represented in the selected short stories.

THEORISING VIOLENCE

In order to understand the trauma and struggles that women and girl children go through, it is important to understand the causal paths and nature of violence. According to Schinkel (2010), many theories designed to explain violence focus on crime, and the perpetrators and their backgrounds. In other words, violence, as a topic in social scientific research, has not been given the full attention that it deserves. Instead of focusing exclusively on the external causes of violence, this chapter intends to show (through the selected stories) that an understanding of the various causes of violence is significant in order to help curb the problem of violence in Namibia. Of interest to the intentions of this chapter is what Schinkel (2010) refers to as the formalist theory of violence vis-a-vis the determinist theory. In other

words, to better understand the formalist dimension of violence, it is significant that reference be made to the determinist approach. According to Schinkel (2010), determinism focuses on the 'external meaning of violence, that is, that of which it is a symptom, to which it refers, is a determinist account of violence' (p. 121). The focus is on the background of the perpetrator and the structural meaning of violence. In this theory, the intrinsic perspective of violence is not accommodated. In fact, determinism explains violence as caused by something else, thus failing to explain the meaning of the object itself, which is, violence.

On the other hand, formalism perceives violence as 'self-referential' (p. 121). This means that formalism seeks to unpack the intrinsic features of violence and by so doing acknowledges the determinist approach that focuses on the structural causes of violence but also realises the possibility that violence may occur for the sake of itself (Schinkel, 2010). According to Schinkel, this view is not dismissive of determinism which focuses on the causes of violence, but advocates that both views be considered in any realistic social sciences research. Thus, we find the formalist theory befitting the aims of this chapter, since the focus is not exclusively on the external causes of violence, but also acknowledges the intrinsic features of violence. This implies that there is 'violence for its sake' and that there may be intrinsic features of violence that 'appeal to a will of violence.' The chapter will examine the possibility of both views as presented in the selected stories in *We Must Choose Life*.

RAPE AND SOCIAL DEATH

Cathy Winker (as cited in Argenti & Schramm, 2010), defines rape as the experience of social death. According to the writer, rapists 'socially murder their victims by trying to take control over their bodies and minds and annihilate their social existence' (p. 45). In other words, rape is a life denying force as it literally fragments the victims by taking control of their whole being. The stories *Raped by her stepfather* by Dausas, *Ndeshuuvu's story* by Esther Namupala Indongo, *Stolen youth* and *Angel* by Taati Niilenge, clearly illustrate how the rape victim is 'disempowered and disconnected and often cannot tell the story of their rape experience, because [of] traumatic memory' (Herman as cited in Argenti & Schramm, 2012, p. 45). This chapter therefore intends to show how the rape act traumatises the victim and makes it difficult to articulate such an experience.

Stolen youth by Taati Niilenge is autobiographical. The author tells the story about her own life; the story of her forced marriage, which began when she was fifteen years old. She is informed – not asked – by her father that she will be married off to Enias. She realises with horror that from then on she will not be a child any more, but a wife living far away from home, with a strange and much older husband and a strange family. She suffers multiple emotions; alarm, fear, horror and disappointment. Her mother is also caught in the web of culture and cannot help her. She says, 'That is our tradition, my girl.' She is as helpless and as powerless as her daughter. The girl recalls a brutal and extremely painful wedding night and at

the age of seventeen she becomes ill and learns that she is infected with HIV. She returns to her parent's house, waiting for her death. She has lost her youth in the first place and now she is going to lose her life as well.

Clearly, early marriage before the age of eighteen exposes the girl child to all forms of evils ranging from domestic abuse, low self-esteem, poverty, abandonment by the husband and parents, and health problems such as HIV and AIDS. In the story the girl simply accepts the father's desire that, 'The time has come for you to take up your role as a woman. Enias here has come to ask for your hand in marriage. He will marry you and you will become his wife' (lKhaxas, 2008, p. 21). The girl is fragmented. She loses her future and her body to somebody else, hence the social death. Not only does she lose her social rights, but she is silenced because she questions the status quo. Sadly, an arranged and forced marriage often to a man who was much older and already married, is a common experience for many girls in various communities of Namibia. Child marriage is a harmful traditional cultural practice and violates many basic human rights of children. It is also a form of domestic violence.

Thus, the story implores women to break the silence about the humiliation and the suffering endured by the girl child. The agony and social death endured by the girl child is indicative of the social injustice in this Namibian society, hence the determinist approach. The harmful cultural practices in the story are the external causes of violence. It can, however, also be argued that the story also illustrates the intrinsic features of violence. By indulging in this violent act, the personal agent clearly shows a will to violence.

Notably, article 14(2) of the Namibian Constitution states that, 'marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. Young women have the right to freely choose their own partners or husbands, and whether they want to marry or not' (p. 12). This chapter therefore, argues that all human beings are born free and equal, with dignity and rights. Yet the dignity and rights of women and girls in many communities are violated in many ways, in particular through the exploitation of some cultural practices in some of the communities. From a determinist perspective, this chapter highlights the causes of violence, namely, the silences and taboos on all forms of violence perpetrated in the name of culture and especially child marriage, and forced marriage or arranged marriage. All forms and acts of external violence against women and girls are brought to light. We argue, however, that the story does not exclusively explore the external causes of violence, but also the intrinsic features of violence. The fact that the perpetrators choose to perform the violent acts for intrinsic pleasure, implies the intrinsic features of violence that 'appeal to a will of violence.'

The story *Raped by her stepfather* by Dausas is about Salmi; a fourteen-year-old girl who was raped by her stepfather and threatened with a gun if she revealed this to her mother. This is violence for violence's sake because there is no personal gain for the stepfather. Fearing rejection by her family and reprisal from her stepfather, Salmi suffers silently and is emotionally and physically fragmented, depressed and

very confused. She drops out of school because of this traumatic experience. When her aunt takes her to the voluntary counselling and testing centre to be tested, the result show that she is HIV positive and pregnant with her stepfather's child. She does not want to see her stepfather again but she has to accept that he is the father of the child. Sadly, her girlhood is erased at this early age. She is forced into womanhood before fully experiencing her girlhood.

According to Patterson (1982, cited in Schramm & Argenti, 2012, p. 46), this is social death because the rape act is seen as the 'normal order of things'. In this regard, Taylor (1991) notes that it is violence to the young girls who still need to grow up which needs to be interrogated. Taylor (1991) also points out that African women are abused because men believe women are their property and therefore they control them. It can as well be argued the sexual abuse of girls is a reflection of gender violence and inequality in the wider society. According to Cohen (1980), a child who is repeatedly abused feels that she/he is helpless against the abuser and begins to believe that there is nothing that can be done to change the situation. This is because fear of reprisal and unwillingness to come out in the open have deepened a culture of silence and enabled the problem to fester undetected and unreported. This culture of silence is reflective of the structural forms of violence that focus on the causes of violence. This chapter therefore suggests that interrogating these 'unsayables' and gender awareness are the principal tools for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. In fact, the problems that girls and women face in many communities are a direct result of a lack of awareness at all levels of society.

The story *Angel* by Taati Niilenge depicts a girl child who is raped and killed by a man. It is a story about a six-year-old little girl, Rachel. On her way back from school, a man who lived in the block of flats where she was staying, summons her, gives her two dollars and asks her to walk with him out of the yard. They enter her dad's work place; the sewage plant. But her daddy was not there and there was nobody. The man rapes the little girl and kills her; holding her upside down by her feet and bashing her head against the wall. In the second part of the story, the narrator talks about the spirit of the girl who observes the rest of the situation after her death.

This narrative reflects the experiences of many girl children in Namibia who are raped and brutally killed by men for intrinsic reasons. Rachel was an innocent child who was unaware of the cruel intentions of her abuser. She asks the man, 'What are you doing Uncle? I don't want to take my pants off, it's cold. What's that? I don't want to see that. I think that's wrong. ... No, No! Uncle, what are you pushing inside me? No, Uncle, it hurts, what are you doing? But Uncle keeps pushing and pushing. It hurts so badly. I feel like fainting' (Niilenge, in lKhexas, 2008, p. 4). This he did with cold-blooded intent to silence her by killing her. At this point, we are reminded of Yvonne Vera's novel *Under the Tongue*, of Zhizha's traumatic experiences as she recalls how her father raped her. Like Rachel in Niilenge's story, Zhizha suffers psychologically and sweeps everything 'under the tongue' (Vera, 1996). In Vera's novel, women and children speak out about these experiences so

that such social injustices are brought out to challenge the society. In this regard, Inspector General Sebastian Ndeitunga (Kistings, 2011) said:

The prominence of violent crime, especially murder and rape, in Namibia is a matter of grave concern to the police. Over the past two weeks, a total of 26 rapes were reported to the police – an average of almost two per day and most of the murders are the result of domestic violence, especially violence against women and children.

The Namibian Constitution protects the equal rights and dignity of all the citizens and outlaws torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. By writing about them, it shows that there is an urgent need to look into the issues of children raped and killed by men. These incidents are like a mirror reflecting the present situation of girl children in Namibia. From a determinist perspective, violence in the stories in *We Must Choose Life* serves a social function. This chapter thus proposes that there must be a transformation at the grass roots level, in the family and local community, in order to protect the lives of girl children.

We also argue that the stories show that it is the responsibility of all to reshape and take an honest look at the lives of children today. Otherwise, 'tomorrow will not be any different from today and yesterday, as the culture of treating girl children as second-class citizens will be perpetuated into the next generations' (IKhaxas, 2005, p. xv). This chapter therefore argues that Namibian women and men can be more open to self-realisation and change for the sake of the children in Namibia

Ndeshuuvu's story by Esther Namupala Indongo is about Ndeshuuvu who was raped by her uncle. One night Meme Mwetuyola was awakened by the scream of her six-year-old daughter Ndeshuuvu, who cried out in her sleep. She held her child, saying to her softly that 'it is just a dream! Go back to sleep'. But she wondered who could be the 'he' that Ndeshuuvu wanted to get rid of, and what he had done to her to result in the nightmare? When Ndeshuuvu was questioned about the nightmare, the parents were shocked that it was uncle Shapumba who had taken her to his bed and hurt her and given her sweets. The girl's father laid a charge against Shapumba and the police arranged a social worker to give her counselling.

A closer look at the story reveals the effect of sexual abuse on the abused. It focuses on the psychological, emotional, behavioural and physical effects on the sexual victims. Ndeshuuvu's story gives a clear picture of these effects. Cohen (1980) notes that children who have been abused will often demonstrate specific symptoms no matter who has abused them. The nightmare Ndeshuuvu goes through and the consequent psychological suffering is because she kept the abuse to herself. She did not share it with anyone. That is the reason she goes through the nightmares where she cries out, 'Get off me! It hurts mama! It's him! Get him off me!' This shows that the rape is not just a painful, passionless experience but it is a psychologically bruising experience. The violation of her body makes her unstable, and emotionally and psychologically fragmented. Jackson (2002, p. 55) alludes to the idea that in the African context, children are treated in a way that encourages silence and submission.

Children suffer from psychological distress because they bottle up their feelings. In the case of Ndeshuuvu, she suppresses the memory of rape and the horrors of the violation through silence which gives her nightmares during her sleep.

According to Finkelhor (1986, p. 45), 'the victim of sexual abuse often goes through long-term negative outcomes. The outcome of it includes emotional effects, which includes depression, low self-esteem, guilt, anxiety and obsessive, compulsive disorder.' Emotional effects according to Finkelhor (1986) are mainly associated with dramatic mood changes. The mood changes are mainly because of confusion and fear, as the victim is uncertain of what would have happened.

In almost all of the rape stories discussed, the causal paths of the sexual abuse are clearly illustrated. The perpetrators are people the victims love and in some cases even family members. From a determinist perspective, the external forces leading to the violent acts are the negative attitudes, beliefs and practices, defended by the so-called advocates who preserve culture and tradition. Rape relations represented in the selected stories seem to be a routine part of the Namibian history which is grounded in traditional cultures of Namibian society. In the context of these stories, we argue that both external and intrinsic features of violence can be used to understand not only the causes of violence but the meaning of violence as well. The cultural practices and norms and the patriarchal nature of the Namibian societies reflected in the selected stories, are the structural agents or the external features of the violent acts. Our analysis of the selected stories from *We Must Choose Life* concludes that the lived experiences of women and children are defined by their cultures and the forms of power embedded in particular cultural forms. The determinism perspective is thus seen in the causes of the violent rape acts. In the rape accounts, the victims give vivid descriptions of their violent experiences but as Klungel (as cited in Argenti & Schramm, 2012) points out, anthropologists have seldom tried to understand what rape means (p. 45). In other words, the causal paths of the violent acts are clearly defined through the external features. The intrinsic features seem to be hidden and not talked about. We also argue that by expressing their rape remembrances, rape survivors challenge dominant discourses, thus crying out for social justice. The extrinsic features of violence are thus functional and are symbolic of social cohesion. As such, Yelvington (2002, p. 235) defines 're-membling as putting together – perhaps a particular sense of community – what has been broken apart.'

These narratives reflect the social death and the traumatic experiences of many girl children in Namibia. In these stories the women and girls have had the courage to bare their hearts and hurts, and open their deep-seated wounds to the world. The analysis of these narratives clearly shows that there is an urgent need to take further steps to achieve the goal of eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl children. Though progress has been made in different fields, major inequalities persist, including harmful traditional practices, child marriage and sex slavery. There is a need therefore, to examine the cultural practices which do not favour the dignity and respect of women and children.

CONCLUSION

These narratives delineate the true stories of young women who are HIV positive and share their traumatic memories as victims of violence. A determinist perspective analysis of the selected stories, explains the causes of violence which are mostly external features. The chapter concludes that the stories emphasise the external features of violence which perceive violence as a symptom of these causes and also explains the background of the violent person. A formalist analysis of these stories, however, shows that the nature of the violence is autotelic, that is, violence for violence's sake. This explanation of violence is seen as violence as an end in itself and emphasises the intrinsic meaning of violence. We conclude that to understand the nature of violence, the causes of violence should not be dismissed but the intrinsic features should also be unpacked. The two perspectives supplement each other and hence both perspectives should be explored to obtain a meaningful explanation of violence.

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‘Keeping a pet Bushman alive’: Piet van Rooyen’s Namibian oeuvre⁸⁴

Helize van Vuuren

Bushmen became the signifier; a romance with alterity. If Bushmen did not exist, we would surely have invented them. The image of the ‘wild’ aborigine or Bushman is not so much an image *from* the past as an image *of* the past. ... (Gordon & Douglas – *The Bushman Myth* [2nd revised edition, 2000])

My retrogression from well set up elephant hunter to white-skinned Bushman was insignificant. ... Would I be able to translate myself soberly across the told tale, getting back to a dull, decent farmer’s life in the shortest possible time, or would I weaken and in a fit of boredom set out down a new path, implicate myself in a new life, perhaps the life of the white Bushman that had been hinting itself to me? (Coetzee – *Dusklands*)

Yesterday I was a Bushman, but today I am something else. (Heinz, J-M. & Lee, M. – *Namkwa: Life Among the Bushmen*)

⁸⁴ This chapter is part of a larger collection of essays on San literature entitled *A Necklace of Springbok Ears – !Xam Orality and South African Literature* published in 2016 by SUN MeDIA Stellenbosch under the SUN PRESS imprint, DOI: 10.18820/9781920689902. The Editors are grateful to the writer and to SUN MeDIA for allowing us to include it in our book.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1994 and 2001 the Afrikaans writer Piet van Rooyen published three novels and an autobiographical work in which the Jul'hoan Bushmen⁸⁵ of Namibia are central figures: either as the community among which he did developmental work in *Agter 'n eland aan* (which translates as 'Following an Eland'), or as characters in a novel. Since this focus in his work has, according to him, now been concluded (Van Rooyen, 2001c), I shall discuss the four texts together, leaving aside his two early volumes of poetry, *Draak op die erf* ('Dragon in the Yard') in 1973 and *Rondom 'n boorvuur*⁸⁶ ('Around a Stick-drill Fire') in 1983, which also contain some Bushman material.

LOSS OF JUL'HOAN CULTURE AND MYTHOLOGY

The autobiographical *Agter 'n eland aan* provides insight into the author's experience of and perspective on the Namibian Jul'hoan (formerly known as the !Kung). He worked from 1990 to 1991 for the Nyae-Nyae Development Foundation in the north-east of Namibia. His main task, ultimately unsuccessful, was to assist with the establishment of cattle farming among the Jul'hoan in the Nyae-Nyae conservancy. His colleagues at the time were the anthropologists Megan Bieseke and Claire Ritchie, as well as the linguist Patrick Dickens, who had devoted their lives to developmental work among the Jul'hoan. There he learned in intimate detail about the living space and traditional culture of the uprooted Jul'hoan, and about the relative bleakness of their situation.

Agter 'n eland aan contains many of the facts and raw material from which the three later novels were derived and out of which they were creatively built. An intertextual reading of the autobiographical text with the fictional oeuvre is, therefore, illuminating. Paul Chapman, the Bushman farmer whose life served as an inspiration for *Die spoorsnyer* ('The Tracker'), worked closely with the author at that time. Of particular importance is the insight into different approaches to the Bushmen, especially the two extremes of idealism on display: that of the largely foreign development workers assisting with literacy, health care and agricultural projects, and the romanticising of the Bushmen by ordinary people:

Die idee wat baie mense van die Boesmans het, is dat die meeste van hulle nog iewers in die uitspansele van die Kalahari bedrewe en rustig van jag en versamel leef en dat hierdie mense in hul oeroue leefwyse in volkome afsondering van die beskawing kan en wil aanhou leef. Die Boesmans word dikwels vereenselwig met 'n simbool, 'n soort kultuur waarna die moderne mens nostalgies terugverlang as 'n verlore gedeelte van sy eie verlede, 'n volkome eenheid met die natuur. Die mense kan en wil nie

⁸⁵ For the choice of the terms 'Bushman' or 'Bushmen', rather than the pejorative and mystifying 'San', see Gordon, 1992, pp. 4–8 and 1997, footnote 1, p. 177.

⁸⁶ A 'boorvuur' refers to the time-worn practice of making fires by friction, using sticks and natural tinder, one certainly used by the Bushmen.

glo dat die soort leefwyse in sy konkrete vorm, die Boesmans, besig is om te verdwyn nie. Soos arm mense televisiesages kyk om hul in te verbeeld in die lewe van die rykes, so wil die moderne mens die 'Boesman-kultuur' as 'n lewende oorblyfsel van sy verlore natuurverlede, nie laat uitsterf nie. (1995, p. 55; my emphasis)

The idea that many people have of the Bushman is that most of them are still active somewhere in the outer reaches of the Kalahari, living peacefully as hunter-gatherers, and that these people can and wish to continue living in their age-old way of life in complete isolation from civilisation. *Bushmen are often associated with a symbol, a sort of culture for which modern man yearns nostalgically as a lost part of his own past, a perfect unity with nature.* People cannot and will not believe that the sort of life led by the Bushmen is disappearing in its concrete form. Just as poor people look at television sagas to vicariously experience the life of the rich, in the same way modern man does not want to allow 'Bushman culture' as a living vestige of a lost past in nature to die out. (My translation and italics.)

As a scientist, Van Rooyen was thoroughly aware of the dangers of romanticising the Bushman as a primordial archetype. As an author, however, Van Rooyen did not shy away from exploiting this view for his own creative purposes ('Bushman' as a symbol of all that modern man has 'lost in himself' – 1994, p. 55). The appeal of his novels in part probably lies in this aspect of his work: for readers caught in the uniformity of a modern global society, it is easy to identify with such romanticising as a way of escaping from a world overwhelmed by materialism and technology. Such fiction plays on the modern person's yearning for a pristine primordial state, and on nostalgia for an unspoiled natural environment.

Together with this, the allure of Van Rooyen's novels also derives from the location of the narratives in a rural Southern African milieu, away from urban existence. They take place in thinly populated parts of Namibia (*Die spoorsnyer*, *Die olifantjagters* ['The Elephant Hunters'] and *Gif* ['Poison']), southern Angola (*Die olifantjagters*) and Botswana (*Gif*). Van Rooyen includes detailed descriptions of local landscapes (the desert, the bush, the Aha mountains, the Tsodilo hills), allowing the novels to transport the reader to exciting and dangerous parts of Africa. These specific milieus are co-role players in the creation of the tension in the fictive worlds of the novels; death is often a strong protagonist in the form of thirst in the desert, the dangers of wild animals, of losing direction and getting lost. The narrator and main focaliser in each case is a white male protagonist (the writer in *Die spoorsnyer*, the development worker in *Die olifantjagters* and Boet Reitz as an endurance horseman in *Gif*). Bushmen as well as white people form part of an intimate group living together for a time in isolation in a dangerous landscape. From time to time, they travel somewhere for a purpose: on the spoor through the desert of absconded Bushmen farm workers (*Die spoorsnyer*); following a legendary

elephant, Maxamesi, to unmapped regions (*Die olifantjagters*); or searching over hill and dale for diamonds (*Gif*). In both *Die spoorsnyer* and *Gif*, all of the characters die; in *Die olifantjagters*, only the narrator and /Asa survive.

Describing the novels in this way makes it sound as though we are dealing with *Boy's Own* adventures. Together with a description of the intimate interaction between white protagonists and Bushmen, both those who have become acculturated and those who are 'wild', the reader also obtains historical and socio-political information about the Jul'hoan Bushmen and their culture (trance dancing, tracking, mythology, stories, and Namibian anecdotes about interaction between the Bushmen and white pioneers). The focus often falls on the interaction between the white protagonist and the Bushman characters. The fact that this interaction has a kind of intimacy resembling the interplay between ego (white protagonist) and alter-ego (Bushman protagonist), provides a psychological complexity as well as a shift towards transculturation – which I understand to mean a changing of culture, a growing acculturation – in this case not that of the Bushman into white culture, but vice versa.

The protagonist in *Die spoorsnyer*, Paul Chapman (an erstwhile hunter-gatherer), becomes a successful cattle farmer. He is then literally 'caught between two cultures'. The white narrator, and main focaliser, is a spectator and admirer of Paul's Bushman knowledge, his skill as a tracker, even if it is now used against Paul's own people. In the next novel, *Die olifantjagters*, the development worker is in part forced to adopt a Bushman lifestyle in the bundu when the elephant hunt goes wrong and he becomes involved in an intimate sexual relationship with the wordless /Asa. He rises metaphorically in the Bushman lifestyle. During their four-month-long trek, Boet Reitz in *Gif* is 'initiated' by Maria into the ways of surviving in the wilderness. There is a discernible line of progression in the growing involvement of each successive protagonist: from spectator-admirer, via someone becoming involved, to the cry of Boet Reitz in the desert: '*Ek is Boesman*' ('I am a Bushman') (2001a, p. 189).

The psychological complexity, a philosophically metaphorical element ('*die mens op sy lewenspad deur woestyne en oor berge*', translated as 'man on his life's journey through deserts and over mountains', à la Bunyan) and, in *Gif*, a psychoanalytical tendency, are all factors that bring ambiguity and layers of meaning to the novels, contrary to what is suggested at first sight by the surface structure of African adventure and suspense story in journeying through the landscape.

THE CONNECTION WITH A LITERARY TRADITION

Cultural interaction between Afrikaans authors and the Bushmen found expression before Van Rooyen in a distinct literary tradition, extending from (among others) works in prose by G. R. von Wielligh, Eugène Marais, the Hobson brothers and Sangiro, to the oeuvres of P. J. Schoeman, J. J. van der Post, Willem Kotzé and Dolf van Niekerk. In Afrikaans poetry, the list is much longer, beginning with Nesper and

Du Toit's polemics in *Ons Klyntji* of 1896. Beyond that, further diverse materials are found, such as missionary writings like the Toornberg diary of Erasmus Smit.

Von Wielligh did 'field work' between 1870 and 1880 in the Calvinia District (at Katkop⁸⁷ from which Bleek and Lloyd's informants had also come). Marais produced literary adaptations, though it is not clear to what extent his *Dwaalstories* are mediated adaptations, and to what extent the enigmatic poetic qualities are a direct reflection of the original narratives.⁸⁸ Animal and hunting stories provide the framework of the Hobson and Sangiro tales. P. J. Schoeman reflects a distinctive anthropological and socio-political focus (accordingly, his stories are less fictional since they are adaptations of his anthropological field notes). J. J. van der Post exploits the youth and adventure story genre. The Bushman novels of Willem Kotzé link up with the same genre. Dolf van Niekerk's *Koms van die hyreën*, ('The coming of the he-rain')⁸⁹ on the other hand, possesses more literary and aesthetic qualities.

Against this background, it would seem that the work of Piet van Rooyen is, on the one hand, an extension of the line running through Von Wielligh and P. J. Schoeman (with the anthropological focus, as is clear in Van Rooyen's autobiographical *Agter 'n eland aan* and in *Die spoorsnyer*); on the other hand, it is also part of a more literary tradition, beginning with Marais and continuing up to Van Niekerk (Van Vuuren, 1996, pp. 49–56). What is added to the 'Bushman' books is the metaphorical substructure, with philosophical and psychoanalytical themes. In addition, there is clearly a generic relationship with the 'literature of survival and adventure', as is also evidenced in the work of J. J. van der Post, who focuses on strong men of action.

VAN ROOYEN'S BUSHMAN OEUVRE

Both *Die spoorsnyer*⁹⁰ and *Gif* end in death. In *Die olifantjagters*, only the narrator and the woman, /Asa, are alive at the end. All the other characters die, as do all the characters in the other two novels as well. These texts are far from being pure adventure stories. *Die spoorsnyer* deals with the tracking down of a small group of runaway Bushman farm workers who want to return to their so-called 'wild' state. The acculturated Bushman, Paul Chapman, tracks them through the desert, together with a white sergeant and a writer. However, they are left to their fate when he is wounded by a poisoned arrow and certain death is their lot. *Gif* also ends with death

⁸⁷ For further information, see my article 'Die mondelinge tradisie van die /Xam en 'n herlees van Von Wielligh se Boesman-Stories (vier dele, 1919–1921)', in *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, XXXIII (1), 1995, pp. 25–35.

⁸⁸ The burning question is why the editors of *Human & Rousseau* felt the need to 'purge' the reissued *Dwaalstories*?

⁸⁹ The Bushmen believed in a 'she' rain (soft and friendly) and a 'he' rain (a harsh, hard, unstoppable rain, seemingly continuing forever unless a shaman took some supernatural action) (Hollmann 2004, p. 130).

⁹⁰ For an extensive discussion of *Die spoorsnyer*, see my article, "'Op die spoor": Interkulturele wisselwerking tussen Boesman en Afrikaner in resente Afrikaanse prosa', in *Tydskrif vir letterkunde* XXXIV (1/2), 1996, pp. 49–56.

by a poisoned arrow; this time, the death of the main character and storyteller, Boet Reitz, adventurer and horseman. In *Die olifantjagters*, Bell Huger, the 'elephant hunter', dies by his own hand – in line with his earlier declaration that 'a violent death ... is a good death' – like Paul and Boet in the other two novels.

In both the elephant hunting story and the last novel, it is suggested that the journeys are also a movement into the past. The main character in *Die olifantjagters* declares: '*Ons het lankal oer geraak*' ('We have long *become primordial*') (p. 196, my emphasis and italics). In *Gif*, we read: '*niks keer ons nou meer om die verlede in te ry nie*' ('nothing is stopping us now *from riding into the past*') (p. 48, my emphasis and italics).

The enigmatic process of becoming 'primordial' (a new creation) implies also the gradual loss or stripping away of values and *accoutrements* of (Western) civilisation. The murdered farm Bushman, Thomas, is still buried, for example, in the desert as the '*laaste ritueel van beskaaftheid*' ('a last ritual of civilisation') (2001a, p. 174). It is also clearly suggested that such a journey back into the 'primitive time' of the 'aboriginal people' can only be temporary. In reading this together with *Gif* it would appear to me that these two novels present only a temporary discarding of white civilisation by the narrators (the development worker in *Die olifantjagters* and Boet Reitz in *Gif*). This process is linked with moving back in time – against the historical course of development. On the one hand, it is connected with awareness that the lifestyle of the hunter-gatherer is over, as is also the era of adventurers, big-game hunters and explorers. The imaginary, fictional journeys described in the novels are subtly recognised as flights of fancy with phrases such as 'we became primordial' and 'ride into the past'. These phrases suggest a typically postmodern subversion of the mimetic credibility of the texts. In this regard they closely agree with the meta-textual comments in *Die spoorsnyer* where the 'author' character frequently wonders how his editor will react to the text and refers at the outset to the '*sewe oor-en-weer vermakerige geeste*' ('the seven spirits teasing one another') (1994, p. 17) – a clear allusion to the element of fantasy in the fiction (Van Vuuren, 1996, p. 52).

Particularly in *Die spoorsnyer* and *Gif* there is, besides the realistic story line, also a metaphorical richness of characters, landscape, and action. The I-narrator tends towards identification with the Bushman life style. Twice in *Gif* he declares, 'I am a Bushman' (2001a, p. 189). Within the psychoanalytical framework of *Gif*, one cannot interpret this statement by the main character as just the raving of a hallucinating Westerner in the desert. To be a 'Bushman' is also to attain an intensely desired state, freed from what is considered to be the unnecessary 'baggage' of the modern Westerner.

In the reception of Van Rooyen's work, attention was given mostly to the realistic story lines, together with references to their symbolic interpretation. However, it seems to me as if *Gif* opens up possibilities for a more meaningful reading of his work, especially as regards the constant focus throughout on the Bushman culture and way of life, together with its psychoanalytical richness. In a certain sense, questions

already raised in the earlier Bushman novels are brought to a head in this book, such as the growing identification of white protagonists with a Bushman counterpart.

Shane Moran convincingly argues that the imagined journey into the past, back to a primordial beginning, is a precarious intellectual construct.

An ethic of nostalgia for origins of archaic and natural innocence, haunts even the acceptance of contaminated origins ... and ... is also a search for a common root or bridge over the painful abyss of colonialist mediation. ... [H]ow far can this project hope to avoid ... *reappropriating the other* to the propriety of the natural? (1995, pp. 23–24; my italics)

Together with re-appropriation, he also highlights the dangers of a metaphorical view of the Bushman '[which] runs the risk of succumbing to an ethnocentric trope of white mythology – seeing the primitive as metaphorical (Rousseau's *Essay on the origin of languages*)' (1995, pp. 23–25). The danger to which he refers is the sweeping aside of the victims and their descendants in a process of re-colonisation, re-appropriation and expunging of the socio-historical context. Lyotard (1987, p. 107) refers to two related language procedures employed in the discourse of power: firstly, the communally directed, conservative mythical narrative, typical of traditional communities, with a backward-looking orientation towards an 'origin'; and, secondly, the emancipatory narrative, or a metanarrative that is oriented towards the future.

Of importance in this connection is not the content of the narratives as such, but rather their pragmatic interpretation (Lyotard, 1987, p. 109); in other words, one must ask what implicit ideological perspective is presented by the narratives – in this instance, the Bushman trilogy of Van Rooyen? My hypothesis is that this triptych of novels suggests a conservative mythical narrative, oriented towards a primordial human and ideal 'origin'. The following elements figure as an ideological point of departure: (a) a cultural pessimism about contemporary Western society and the ideal of the white male protagonist; (b) the idea of stripping the self (of materialistic encumbrances); and (c) a literal paring down by the repeated testing of physical endurance within a masculine discourse (tracker, elephant hunter, long-distance horseman, explorer and adventurer).

This narrative, spread over three novels, is supported by a metaphorical substructure derived from Bushman culture, in which stereotypical perceptions of the Bushmen as 'primitive people' (self-sufficient, rugged children of nature, without materialistic rapacity) serve as metaphors in the fictional world for the ideal being sought, away from the Western individual-materialistic way of living. There is an implied irony (and paradox at the heart of the oeuvre) in that it is the white protagonists who initiate the process, who are the chief role players in the action, both physically and psychologically, and in that their idealised stripping processes take place in the framework of a traditional Bushman way of life that has been irretrievably lost. On the one hand, this speaks of supposed acculturation and

transculturation (the white man calls out, 'I am a Bushman') while, on the other hand, the stripping away can only take place within imaginary journeys into the past, back to a primitive beginning, which makes the whole process *sur erasure* – swept away as an impossibility, something that cannot be attained, a creative sleight of hand.

An article by Van Rooyen (2001b, pp. 21–39) on Namibian literature before independence and the work of Doc Immelman⁹¹ also offers some insight into the younger author's views on, and relationship with, the country and its people:

Namibië as omgewing waarbinne literatuur ontstaan, bied unieke moontlikhede aan die skrywer van fiksie. Die besondere natuurlike omgewing van die land en die uitgestrektheid, ongeskondenheid en dorheid daarvan het 'n eiesoortige invloed op die inwoners, op die skrywer en op sy karakters en lei die leser in 'n eiesoortige, dikwels onbekende en soms werklikheidsvreemde wêreld in. (2001b, p. 22; my emphasis)

Namibia, as a setting in which literature develops, presents unique opportunities to the writer of fiction. The peculiar natural environment of the country and its spaciousness, inviolateness and aridity have a distinctive influence on the inhabitants, on the writer and on his characters, and lead the reader into *a distinctive, often unknown and sometimes alien world*. (My translation and italics)

This exotic view of the Namibian landscape as a 'sometimes alien world' is also typical of the descriptions of place in Van Rooyen's novels, in which specific geographical evocations of landscape and spatial influence are striking structural elements that play a definitive role in the course of the narrative. The comments on border fiction that Van Rooyen quotes approvingly are also riveting as keys to certain aspects of his work. In this way, he refers to Nelson's remark about two trends in border fiction: on the one hand, the trend towards realism (landscape descriptions and versions of conflict situations between invaders and the indigenous people) and, on the other hand, the trend towards romanticising as 'an ideological instrument whereby historical and cultural morality, the guilt or innocence of the invader is addressed' (Nelson, 1992, p. 39):

In dié sin is die betekenis van hierdie romans aanduibaar as pogings om die ervaring van die vreemde, die Ander, in die oor-grens situasie te mitologiseer en te simboliseer ... (quoted in Van Rooyen, 2001b, p. 26)

In this sense the meaning of these novels is clearly an attempt to mythologise and symbolise the experiencing of the strange, the Other, in the cross-border situation ... (my translation)

In interviews, however, Van Rooyen often emphasises that he 'has no guilt', just as the concept of guilt 'is foreign to the Bushman'. The concept of the historical

⁹¹ Based on research for an MA dissertation in Afrikaans at the University of Namibia, Windhoek (2001).

collective guilt of the Afrikaner, to which Antjie Krog clearly subscribes in *Country of my skull* (1998), is therefore one that Van Rooyen does not share. How, then, should one understand Van Rooyen's technique of romanticising the Bushman as metaphorical substructure in his oeuvre? The progression of white protagonists through the triptych, from spectator to physical and sexual initiation when Boet Reitz ultimately asserts, 'I am a Bushman', hints at the implicit ideological level at a turnabout process in the civilising project of colonial times. The ideal of bringing civilisation, as attempted by missionaries and pioneers, with the accompanying destruction of indigenous culture and beliefs, is inverted here, where the white man intensely seeks to 'become a Bushman'. In this sense the Van Rooyen trilogy describes an ideological reckoning with the past and can even be characterised in Lyotard's terms as an emancipatory narrative.

The nature of the metaphorical role assigned to the Bushman in the trilogy, requires clarification. In all four of Van Rooyen's texts, novels as well as autobiographical work, there are four types of characters: 'wild' and 'tame' (acculturated) Bushman, alongside two kinds of white characters: sergeant and writer in *Die spoorsnyer*; elephant hunter and development worker among the Bushmen in *Die olifantjagters*; and old farmer and adventurer in *Gif*.

The four groups of characters represent various stages of cultural and technological development. The first two are the 'primitive' hunter-gatherers (with an extensive and unique cosmology and knowledge of nature) and the acculturated farm workers, such as the shaman, the two girls and Paul Chapman in *Die spoorsnyer* (on the cutting edge between two cultures, knowing about nature and their mythology, but also about the Western way of life and influence of Christian religion). Pitted against them are white representatives of Western 'civilisation'. The third group includes the sergeant, elephant hunter and the old farmers, typical colonial figures and relics of an earlier age. Their perspective differs from that of the male protagonist, who represents the fourth group, and who becomes increasingly involved with being a 'Bushman' in each novel. Members of the third group question neither their position (or culture or status) as 'authority' figures, nor the implications of their actions as people in authority over the Bushmen. The white male protagonists in each of the novels, however, do indeed do this. Having a sensitivity towards cultural differences, they weigh up Western values against those of traditional Bushman culture and find the latter to be a more attractive option, even an ideal to be striven for, while the value system of their own culture is regarded as stifling and to be rejected. The elephant hunter, in the light of his marriage with /Asa, is a possible exception. His description of her in terms of womanhood is particularly unsympathetic. Nevertheless, this relationship probably serves as an example for the development worker character of another possible existence, a different experience of sexuality than that which has thus far been known to him, as illustrated by the subsequent development in intrigue.

What is, however, more compelling than this categorisation is the nature of the intercultural relationships. In all three of the novels, the white protagonist has a particularly intimate relationship with a Bushman character from whom he 'learns':

Paul Chapman as master tracker and expedition leader in *Die spoorsnyer*; /Asa as lover and saviour from the desert in *Die olifantjagters*; and Maria as 'counsellor' (understood as adviser and direction giver, wise primordial mother and key to survival in the desert) in *Gif*. These relationships are the post-colonial 'markers' in the novels, and clearly show the difference from colonial texts.

Referring to cultural pessimism about the state of Western civilisation, Lévi-Strauss, in *Tristes Tropiques*, makes the following observation about anthropologists and their admiration for foreign societies:

... the value he attaches to foreign societies – and which appears to be higher in proportion as the society is more foreign – has no independent foundation; it is a function of his disdain for, and occasionally hostility towards, the customs prevailing in his native setting... the anthropologist appears respectful to the point of conservatism as soon as he is dealing with a society different from his own. (1955, p. 383; my italics)

The greater the disdain for the person's own society and culture, the greater the value attached to the foreign lifestyle and culture. This observation seems apposite, particularly when regarding the last two Bushman novels of Van Rooyen, with their clearly embedded cultural pessimism towards Western society.

If these novels are indeed read as romanticising the Bushman, the reader is confronted by an implied cul-de-sac: the traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle no longer exists, it has been overtaken by 'civilisation', the hunting fields have been swallowed up by development: 'The image of the 'wild' aborigine or Bushman is not so much an image *from* the past as an image *of* the past...' (Gordon & Douglas, 2000, p. 251). That lifestyle and space exist only in the 'remembrance of things past' – in the imagination and old anthropological textbooks.

In *Gif*, the clear rejection of modern Western society is emphasised time and again: '*wat het ek werklik gehad wat ek kan verloor – 'n vervelig geworde lewe ...?*' ('what did I really have that I can lose – a life that has become boring ...?') (2001a, p. 37), wonders Boet Reitz; '*die mure van 'n alledaagse bestaan sluk my maar net weer die ou beperkings in*' ('the walls of a mundane existence once again enclose me inside their old limitations') (2001a, p. 35). Material possessions and technological knowledge are dismissed with the negative remark: '*wat het ons nou meer as die Boesmans van die veld [?]*' ('What more do we have than do the Bushmen of the veld [?])' (2001a, p. 172).

If the 'civilised', Western life of the white main character's world is unbearable to him, and the traditional way of life of the hunter-gatherer no longer exists, then escaping into the imagination, back into the past, is the only way out. Viewed in this way, the conclusion of both *Die spoorsnyer* and *Gif*, which end in the death of all the characters, is the inevitable termination of these fictive events and lives. There is no other logical possibility; adventures in the unspoiled wilderness, as undertaken by the colonial travellers of old, are no longer possible, except as journeys through time via the imagination or old texts in which the 'real Africa' still exists as a 'hunter's

paradise, dream, nightmare, white adversary, treasure guardian, timeless' (2001a, p. 152). The Bushman characters are symbols, like Maria in *Gif*, 'with enough primitive blood to carry for us the keys of the desert' (2001a, p. 172), or /Asa, in *Die olifantjagters*, who with her intimate knowledge of the veld can survive in the wilderness, 'as [in] ancient times' (2001a, p. 153). The same function is fulfilled by Paul Chapman, the 'tame' Bushman in *Die spoorsnyer*, when he is struck by the shaman's poisoned arrow. Death also becomes inevitable for the two white members of the tracking commando who are lost in the desert without his survival skills.

THE CHARACTERISATION OF WOMEN

In *Die spoorsnyer*, the two young women in the fleeing group are anonymous, uniform presences, without specific identity. They form the 'rear-guard' of the fugitives, with the two men, the shaman and the man-with-the-bad-scar more clearly defined figures in the fleeing group. The pursuers consist of three men: the acculturated Bushman, Paul Chapman, and two white men, the writer and the sergeant. The women in *Die olifantjagters* (Maria) and *Gif* (/Asa) are strongly defined and characterised as individuals in the foreground of the novel. They are metaphorical representatives of the past, but also 'vehicles' or bearers for romanticising the past, the 'primordial time'. The relationship between the I-narrator and Bushman women is also striking. /Asa in *Gif* rescues the white development worker from certain death in the desert and leads him back to civilisation. They are the only two survivors of the original hunting party.

Both Maria and /Asa are initially seen in a derogatory light, one as a wrinkled old housemaid and the other as a bored, acculturated sex-object, almost an animal. '... as sy op hitte is, kan ek nie waag om haar alleen te los nie' (If she comes on heat, I dare not leave her alone') (1997, p. 104) declares her German husband, as though talking of an animal. This perspective suggests a fetish with the supposed unbridled sexuality of the foreign unknown 'other', to which Robert Young refers as a typical feature of the paradoxical colonial attitude that is a 'marker' of racist bias.⁹²

In the course of time, the women in Van Rooyen's oeuvre become metaphorical bearers of ontic knowledge and the ability to survive in the veld. The fact that the I-narrator in *Die olifantjagters* cannot communicate with /Asa in words and can only 'have intercourse' physically, as well as the fact that the relationship is still so romanticised, is, in my opinion, a weakness, an unconvincing aspect of the text. A male ideal of the literally wordless, 'brute' woman? The figure of /Asa is excessively and exclusively loaded with traditional 'female' qualities such as instinct, emotion and irrationality, and above all, viewed as a sexual object.⁹³

⁹² 'Colonialism was always locked into the machine of desire', 1995, p. 181, and 'a supposed black sexual degeneracy and biological inferiority', 1991, p. 238.

⁹³ It is striking that when this novel was first published none of the male critics showed any trace of criticism of this male utopia – a (Bushman) woman, the wordless object of desire *par excellence* for the two main male characters (even sexually 'worked' in an elephant carcass, within hearing of her own husband). The novel won the M-Net Prize without a single critical voice being raised about the depiction of this Bushman woman as 'brute' sex object.

The wrinkled old housemaid, Maria, is transmogrified in *Gif* in a magical way into a Mother Africa figure (2001a, p. 11), nurse (2001a, p. 156), counsellor (2001a, p. 198), and bearer of 'the keys of the desert' (2001a, p. 172). She seems also to grow younger every day in the eyes of the protagonist (2001a, p. 175). But Maria is sacrificed when the main character finally chooses to save the life of his thoroughbred Arabian mare rather than that of the Bushman woman. At the moment of choosing between woman and mare, the reader is back in the "dusklands" of history' (Attwell, 1993, p. 38), with Boet Reitz as representative of the colonising pioneer at the border, confronted by the threatening 'wild Bushman'. The fact that J. M. Coetzee had as far back as 1974 parodied this violent colonial confrontation between self and the other in *Dusklands*, performs a strong intertextual role in the reading of *Gif*.

The symbolism attached to the figure of Maria is particularly rich. She goes beyond her role as wrinkled housemaid (a 'serving Martha') and becomes metaphorically 'loaded', firstly by being named Maria (after the important holy figure in the Roman Catholic religion, primeval mother) in the context of the novel being transformed syncretistically by Frans from 'Mother Mary' into 'Mother Africa'.⁹⁴ The choice of the horse's life over hers suggests ultimately, however, a levelling of her value as a human being, and specifically as a woman, 'indigenous [wo]man as frontier fodder', one might say, in line with Dorian Haarhoff's perspective on 'The wild South-West' and its frontier myths (Haarhoff, 1991, p. 173).

The horse is ultimately of greater value to Boet Reitz in the masculine game of tracking Koos Sas. Traditionally, horse and rifle, the two possessions over which Boet Reitz and the Bushman fight to the death, stand as attributes with which the hero, representative of civilisation, confronts the untamed forces in the wilderness.⁹⁵ All feminine attributes are stripped away, until the self is reduced to a battle for survival against the natural elements and the enemy. All that is left, for which he and Sas fight, are the horse and rifle as symbols of endurance and certain death for the enemy.

AFRICAN EXPERIENCE, CULTURAL PESSIMISM AND METAPHORICAL SUBSTRUCTURE

This oeuvre suggests an experience of Africa from the precolonial and colonial eras: hunting, travelling, facing dangers such as wild animals and untamed nature, plus combating formidable opponents, because 'all want to believe that there is still something special to kill in Africa' (*almal wil glo dat daar nog iets besonders in Afrika is om dood te maak*) (1997, p. 159). This 'all' probably mainly represents the perspective of the big-game hunter. Apparently with the anti-hunting critics in mind, the I-narrator and Bushman-development worker, bitinglly observes:

⁹⁴ See Chapter 9 for a discussion of the use of Mother Africa as a trope in Namibian poetry.

⁹⁵ The instruments of civilisation, such as the horse and the rifle (HvV: in Doc Immelman's work), play an important role as part of the equipment of the heroic figure (Van Rooyen, 2001b, p. 36).

Wat is op die ou end meer laakbaar – om te kan sê: 'Ek het olifant geskiet in Afrika', of 'Ek hou 'n troetelboesman aan die lewe'? (1997, p. 48)

In the end, what is more blameworthy – to be able to say: 'I shot an elephant in Africa' or 'I am keeping a pet Bushman alive'? (my translation)

This statement suggests that if elephant hunting as a sport can be criticised it is just as unacceptable to want, like the idealistic development workers among the Bushmen in Nyae-Nyae, to change the previously 'wild' Bushman virtually into 'pets', that is, cattle farmers, well-educated people, domesticated people made out of former hunter-gatherers.⁹⁶ The statement is, however, ambiguous and could also mean that the 'I' in the first person refers to the speaker, the I-narrator, with regard to the last part of the utterance. One could then understand the sentence as the contrasting of two utterances: the European or American big-game hunter who announces boastfully at home that he has shot an elephant in Africa, as against the I-narrator who admits that he is keeping a 'pet Bushman'.

'In the end, what is more blameworthy...?' implies that the speaker is aware that both lifestyles and hobbies can be criticised and that both activities invite criticism. Read in accordance with the second paraphrase, there is a meta-textual awareness built into the oeuvre of the precarious vulnerability and exposure to possible criticism of the thematics of the Van Rooyen texts focused on Bushmen (identified with the keeping alive of a 'pet' Bushman who has long been sentenced to death, or who has actually already died). This implies awareness that as writer he is engaging in 'keeping a pet' or romanticising and reaching back nostalgically to what has already gone.

Bushman knowledge is increasingly used in each succeeding novel as the metaphorical bearer of philosophical ideas about human life in general. In this regard, the Bushmen and their culture, like the animals in totemism, become good to think about; or, in other words, Bushmen are equivocally '*goed om mee te dink*' ('good to think with') (*Die spoorsnyer*, p. 112). In these novels, the Bushmen are bearers helping the thought processes, as well as making it pleasurable or pleasant to philosophise with their help and their culture. Compare Lévi-Strauss's statement about totemism:

The animals in totemism cease to be solely or principally creatures which are feared, admired, or envied: *their perceptible reality permits the embodiment of ideas and relations conceived by speculative thought on the basis of empirical observations*. We can understand, too, that natural species are chosen not because they are 'good to eat' but because *they are 'good to think'*. (*Totemism*, 1963 [1962], p. 89; my italics)

⁹⁶ The 'I' then stands as representative of a statement that could be made by anyone, typical of a bias, an attitude, a preference.

Phenomena and concepts central to traditional Bushman culture, become the bearers of different philosophical ideas in a metaphorical and allegorical framework. As in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, even the landscape becomes a metaphorical bearer (compare the descent in the Drotzky caves, thirst in the desert, diving in the Okavango in *Gif*, and the reading of tracks in all three novels as markers of absent presences). 'Tracking' becomes metaphorically the tracing of the course of a human life⁹⁷ *'Met al die draaie wat die mens loop, al die paaie wat onder sy voete deurskuif, is daar ooit 'n plek waar hy kan sê: 'Hiervandaan, van hierdie plek af, is my spore onwegwaaibaar?'* ('With all the twists and turns that one takes, all the paths that one follows, is there ever a place where one can say: From now on, from this place, my tracks cannot be blown away?') (1994, p. 52) – but also of telling stories or writing (see Van Vuuren, 1996, pp. 49–56). In *Die olifantjagters*, the supposedly unmaterialistic existence of the Bushman is used as a metaphor for the lifestyle of the development worker among the Bushmen: *'Ek het geen testament of versekering nie; net my eiewil en my eie bereidwilligheid om die noodlot te tart. Ten minste is ek vry van bagasie'* ('I have no last will or insurance; just my own will and my own preparedness to dare fate. At least I am free of baggage.') (1997, p. 66). Finally, in *Gif*, Boet Reitz runs away from civilisation like a nomadic Bushman, *'na ver plekke'* ('to faraway places') (2001a, p. 32), away from a life that has become boring (2001a, p. 37), and identifies himself increasingly with the Bushman. He enters completely into his adopted identity when he cries out twice: 'I am a Bushman'. At the end of *Gif*, the white Western ego of Boet Reitz merges with the darker Bushman alter ego of Koos Sas, his follower who cursed him. The curse of Koos Sas is multifaceted, and can be read as reprisal for generations of pursued and massacred Bushmen:

⁹⁷ The idea of *'Lebensspuren'* is reflected in the title of Helmut Sembdner's 1959 biography of Heinrich von Kleist. Sembdner explains the laborious biographical detective work – of investigating the course or 'road' of a human life – by means of the striking analogy of 'tracking' one's prey:

Was bleibt im Gedächtnis der Zeitgenossen, in Dokumenten und literarisch fixierten Äußerungen von einem Menschen erhalten? *Wie spiegelt sich sein Dasein in der Umwelt und wie lässt sich aus den vielfältigen Spiegelungen ein Bild seines Lebens rekonstruieren? Wenn man mit dieser Fragestellung den Spuren nachgeht, die Kleists Leben im Bewusstsein der Zeitgenossen oder in amtlichen Dokumenten hinterlassen hat, wenn man auch die unscheinbarsten, oft übersehenen Indizien sammelt und sie in den Zusammenhang einordnet, so ergibt sich aus den vielen, oft winzigen Mosaiksteinen und Splintern das Panorama eines Lebens und Wirkens, das im Gesamtanblick zu den großartigsten und erschütterndsten Bildern gehört, die das Schicksal gestaltet hat. ... Aus Dokumenten entsteht hier eine Biographie, die in ihrer Unmittelbarkeit erregender als irgendeine romanhafte Lebensdarstellung wirken muss.* (1959, pp. VIII–IX; my emphasis)

(What remains of a person in the memory of contemporaries, in documents and fixated literary remarks? How is their being in the world reflected and how is an image of a life to be reconstructed from the multi-fractured reflections? If one traces his footprints with these questions in mind, the life of Kleist as it has been left behind in the consciousness of contemporaries or in official documents, if one gathers also the inconspicuous, often overlooked circumstantial records and orders them in context, what results from the many, often minute and splintered mosaic stones is the panorama of a life and work that in total perspective belongs to the greatest and most harrowing images which fate has shaped. ... From documents a biography then appears, which in its immediacy must be more moving than any novelistic biography could feasibly be.) (1959, pp. VIII–IX; my translation and italics)

'My gif sal julle nooit los nie. Nou het julle die pad vir julleself laat doodloop.' (2001a, p. 66)

'My poison will never leave you. Now you have made the road come to an end for yourselves.' (my translation)

The curse can also be interpreted historically within the framework of interaction between settler-farmers and Bushmen, the pioneers and indigenous people. The colonial history of the extinction of the Bushman plays a part in this. The idea of collective guilt resonates by implication in the sound of the words.

Through their metaphorical richness and traditional culture, the Bushman becomes the symbol of 'the other' in the self. A 'pet Bushman' becomes a psychological phenomenon: 'the Bushman in myself'. Ton Lemaire criticises this phenomenon in his authoritative cultural-philosophical work, *De Indiaan in ons bewustzijn*:

... om door te kunnen dringen tot de Indiaan 'in zich' moest als het ware de werking van onze geschiedenis te niet worden gedaan. ... De nostalgie van sommigen naar de Indiaan van vroeger vergeet dat wat typisch Indiaans lijkt, eigenlijk slechts een voorbijgaande verschijningsvorm is in de geschiedenis van onze relatie met hen. ... De Indianen zijn geen fossielen van een 'tijdloos verleden', maar maken deel uit van die wereldomvattende processen van verandering die op gang zijn gebracht door het tijdperk van de ontdekkingsreizen. (Tristes Tropiques, 385). (Lemaire, 1986, pp. 240 & 242)

To be able to penetrate to the Indian 'in the self' the effect of our history should not be discounted. ... The nostalgic feeling of some for the extinct Indian forgets that what seems to be typically Indian is only a passing apparition in the history of our relationship with them. ... Indians are not fossils of a 'timeless past', but constitute one aspect of globally-inclusive processes of change which were brought about through the era of journeys of discovery. (my translation)

From Lemaire's comments it appears that fostering an archetypal Bushman-in-myself, like the parallel 'Indian in our consciousness', says more about the Westerner's psychological needs and dissatisfaction with his or her own culture and state of existence than about the imaginary pristine, archetypal Bushmen or Indian. Koos Sas in *Gif* was a historical figure, a light-footed, cunning and elusive Bushman, whose skull was displayed in the Montagu Museum for a long time. David Kramer has commemorated him in his revue, *Die Ballade van Koos Sas*, (2000). Boerneef's character, Dirk Ligter, who became legendary for his fleet-footed ability to disappear from those pursuing him, is a related figure. Exploiting the archetype confronts the Afrikaans reader directly with history – the skull of Koos Sas, Dirk Ligter and Koos Sas in *Gif* are all archetypes of the surviving, continuing but legendarily fleet-footed Bushmen at a time when most traditional communities had long been exterminated by Boer commandos. The curse of Koos Sas in *Gif* can be read as

representing a collective curse of the Bushmen and their ancestors on account of their extermination. Even if they are still only wordless wraiths in the landscape, their disturbed existence is suggested by the 'traces' of Bushman paintings on the widely distributed walls of caves.

CONCLUSION

To return to my initial question: why do all the novels, except for *Die olifantjagters*, end in death? Given the romanticising of the traditional Bushman way of life, which has gone for good, and given the cultural pessimism about Western society implicit in the author, it is inevitable. None of the novels offer an opening to the future and yet nothing stops us from taking flights of fancy into the past (*Gif*, p. 48) and from declaring, '*Ek is Boesman*'. But ultimately these remain flights of fancy, with white characters as the focus, back to long-past pre-colonial and early colonial times. The white protagonists can 'play' Bushman, but the Bushman stream of consciousness is never explored from the inside. The imagination in the Van Rooyen novels fails at this point. Paul Chapman as narrator is the closest the reader comes to intimate knowledge of a Bushman perspective. If contemporary Western civilisation is experienced as untenable, what is the alternative? Death as ending in *Die spoorsnyer* and *Gif* '*Ek weet ek het verdrink*' ('I know I have drowned', p. 202) speaks metaphorically of the cul-de-sac, the lack of a viable, contemporary solution, which the creative imagination ultimately confronts in this Bushman trilogy.

In *Dusklands* the protagonist asks: 'Would I be able to translate myself soberly across the told tale, getting back to a dull, decent farmer's life in the shortest possible time?' (Coetzee, 1974, p. 105). Only in *Die olifantjagters* does Van Rooyen succeed in reversing the retrogression to 'becoming primeval' and in translating his main character partially back to modern society. In *Die spoorsnyer* and *Gif*, the white protagonists die as a result of the poison of Bushman arrows. Read metaphorically, the fates of these white characters point to death through a Bushman curse, expressed on behalf of an exterminated collective. They appear also to point to an inability of the creative imagination to move back to the point of departure of the novels, our current modern society, or to any other possibility or form of existence.

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19

Will there be written literature in Jul'hoansi, a Khoesan language of Namibia?

Kerry Jones and Megan Biesele

INTRODUCTION

It has been generally agreed by educators and linguists around the world that the best approach to education and literacy is via the student's mother tongue (Hays, 2007). The skill of critical thinking is best learned through the language in which the student grew up, no matter what language circumstances surround the student in the wider society. Accordingly, international educators urge the learning of literacy skills through the mother tongue for at least the first three to four years of schooling, after which these skills may be transferred to a lingua franca (Alidou, et al., 2006). No meaningful adult literacy can, however, be developed from such beginnings unless an adult tradition of reading develops. For adults to read, there has to be something of interest available, i.e., materials which progressively expand beyond those for the elementary grades. So the first challenge for many minority and endangered language communities is the development of a first written form or orthography of their oral linguistic heritage.

During the past two decades, quite a number of projects have been developed around the world to address the need for written languages and for literacy materials for the first few grades of schooling in previously oral languages (Cantoni, 2007). In the Southern African Khoesan language area alone, some 20 projects, dealing with some 15 languages, are listed in a current publication (Biesele, 2014). Sponsors of these projects include: educators, anthropologists, linguists, non-governmental

organisations (NGOs), and even the indigenous communities themselves. Each project on this listing, along with others from around the world, however, faces the challenge of developing reading materials of interest and use by young adults and adults. Can and will this challenge be met by proactive efforts? Can this challenge in fact be met proactively? Or does an ongoing literate tradition imply a more organic cultural development in parallel with the lengthy development of the written traditions of previously oral languages along with those which have longstanding literacy traditions?

It may be impossible to answer these questions in a comprehensive way. We have as yet, little information on how such cultural processes can or will play out in our complex, increasingly electronic global world. Already highly hegemonised by powerful Asian and European languages which are backed by massive economies, we are now in an information age where such information is represented by dominant languages and seems to be inimical to hushed voices. Yet it seems a pity to let the vast knowledge which is encoded in minority languages, recently written languages, and orally held systems of thought, to vanish without a fight. This chapter explores questions revolving around the establishment and development of literacy and literary traditions in smaller language communities. Some answers may be found through looking at the past and present experience of an endangered language spoken by the Jul'hoansi (pronounced roughly 'Ju-twansi') of the Nyae Nyae, Namibia. The Jul'hoansi are involved in a long-term, ongoing attempt for their language to have a possible written future and a literature of its own.⁹⁸

JUL'HOANSI: AN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE

Jul'hoansi is spoken by approximately 17,000 people in Namibia and Botswana, and is considered endangered (Biesele, Pratchett, & Moon, 2013). David Crystal calls the potential loss of the world's endangered languages 'the greatest intellectual disaster that the planet has ever known' (Crystal, 2000). Yet his book, *Language Death*, rightly calls attention to the meaninglessness of absolute population sizes in language endangerment. Population figures pertaining to language endangerment range from 100,000, to 20,000, to below 100 remaining speakers (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2009). All Khoesan languages of Southern Africa (including Khoekhoegowab, with the greatest number of speakers) have 'click' consonants and other distinctive features and are considered endangered languages when taking into account their speaker population size (Brenzinger, 2011). The overall economic status of these peoples is considered low, guaranteeing the rapid disappearance of their languages and knowledge if no action is taken (Hays & Siegrühn, 2015).

The Jul'hoan people are familiar to others in Southern Africa and the wider world through literature, both academic and in the media, and in popular films

⁹⁸ A note on terminology: The word 'Jul'hoan' is an adjective, for example, the Jul'hoan people, Jul'hoan culture or Jul'hoan traditional practices. The word 'Jul'hoansi' is a noun and can refer to the people or the language.

such as *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. In these publications and products, the Jul'hoansi are typically portrayed as knowledgeable hunters of the Kalahari Desert. Yet few outsiders know of the community-promoted educational and language-development projects which have been carried out among the Namibian Jul'hoan people for more than a generation, or that other communities around the world might learn a great deal from their experience.

This chapter provides a historical background of more than twenty years of the written form of Jul'hoansi and how it has been used by the Namibian Jul'hoan people. Their community lives in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy which is centered on Tsumkwe, in the north-eastern part of Otjozondjupa, and to its west and south. The mother tongue and language spoken at home, is Jul'hoansi. Tracing from initiatives by Jul'hoan parents on behalf of their children during the time of Namibia's independence in 1990, this chapter provides an outline of collaborations among communities, NGOs, linguists, and the Namibian education system leading to Jul'hoan educational and language projects that are active today. Some of these projects involved creative writing by Jul'hoan teacher-trainees, students, and leaders in proactive attempts to establish a written Jul'hoan literature. Yet practical obstacles to the furthering of the Jul'hoan language and its literary development abound.

These obstacles are further examined in an attempt to answer the question of whether there would be a written literature in Jul'hoansi. This chapter is written by an active language consultant, the linguist Kerry Jones, and Megan Bieseles, an anthropologist and coordinator of the Jul'hoan Transcription Group (JTG). The JTG is a community heritage documentation project in Tsumkwe, which is now engaged in providing an archive of transcribed and translated Jul'hoan oral literature. Included are statements by a Jul'hoan man, Hacky Kgami Gao, on the importance of local literacy and by Jones, on a community-created, illustrated *Jul'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary* which was published in 2014 (Cwi & Jones, 2014). A chronicle of the efforts of community leaders, scholars, educators, and NGOs is offered, to provide a schooling which may not only help young Jul'hoansi to become vitally involved in the changing world around them, but also to assist in communicating their vast and nuanced cultural heritage effectively, to non-Jul'hoan speakers.

Jul'hoansi, a language of the Khoesan language family, is the mother tongue of former foragers in the north-eastern region of Namibia and adjacent north-western region of Botswana, and has a threatened future existence. At the project site Nyae Nyae in Namibia, with slightly over 2,000 Jul'hoan speakers, Jul'hoansi is still the first language of the Jul'hoan people and precariously holds a national educational language status up to Grade 4. This status was promoted in the first instance through the Village Schools Project which was started by the Nyae Nyae community in 1990 with the help of linguist Patrick Dickens, Megan Bieseles, and educators Melissa Heckler and Lesley Beake. The young Jul'hoan speakers elsewhere in Namibia are already losing access to and use of their language as a

result of economic and political circumstances, although its use persists through religious healing. In Botswana, with 4,000 speakers of Jul'hoansi, it is even less esteemed by children because Botswana has a one language policy (Setswana) with English as the only accepted second language.

Since the early 1990s, from a Namibian policy and legal perspective, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC), has explicitly recognised the importance of mother tongue education during the formative years of formal schooling (MBESC, 1992). The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), a directorate of the MBESC, has facilitated the creation of mother tongue educational materials in Jul'hoansi. In 2000, the Inter-sectoral Task Force on Educationally Marginalised Children, under the MBESC, had identified Jul'hoan children as 'educationally marginalised' and developed policies to cater specifically for such groups of people (MBESC, 2000). Although such Namibian policies provide favourable conditions for the development of mother tongue educational products and projects, their implementation has, in practice, been hindered, due to the frequent change in position of key individuals in government (Hays & Siegrühn, 2015). Over and above this instability and constantly changing political environment, the small numbers of Jul'hoan speakers makes it challenging to justify the continued expense and effort required to produce mother tongue educational materials (Hays & Siegrühn, 2015). Additionally, since the Government of Namibia has taken over the schools, they have been hiring more non-Jul'hoan speakers as teachers, and fewer local people, thereby reducing the input of the mother tongue in the classroom. The non-Jul'hoan speaking teachers have asked for the help of the Jul'hoan Transcription Group so they could learn to read and write Jul'hoansi. Such an endeavour has yet to transpire and is greatly needed in order to maintain the use of the mother tongue in early childhood education for Jul'hoan speaking children.

Viewed as a language, not a dialect, by speakers, Jul'hoansi increasingly yields to Afrikaans, English, or Setswana in outside contexts. Nevertheless, the language has an unparalleled current potential for comprehensive documentation in Nyae Nyae, where the Jul'hoansi have avoided dispossession and fragmentation by creating an internationally recognised land conservancy. The Jul'hoan culture in Nyae Nyae has been extensively studied via long-term projects such as the Harvard Kalahari Research Project, which includes Biesele and, informally, her extensive audiotape collection, which has now been digitised. Additionally, the Jul'hoan language is now experiencing a community revitalisation, especially in Nyae Nyae. The revitalisation may be traced to young people who are literate in both Jul'hoansi and English and who are increasingly employed by the government and other employers, such as the ongoing Village Schools Project and Library Outreach Project which is a heritage documentation project, the Jul'hoan Transcription Group (JTG) described below and by a new Namibian commitment to minority radio, among other interested parties.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOLS PROJECT

The problems of the remoteness and the painful legacy of *de facto* apartheid policies combined in Nyae Nyae to create an educational crisis that was deeply worrisome to Jul'hoan community leaders before Namibia's independence. About that time, as a quote below from then Chairman Tsamkxao †Oma of the Jul'hoan people's organisation shows, the Jul'hoan leaders were strongly motivated to tackle such problems:

When I look into the future to see what (my children) will see, one thing I see is that my children have come to fear schooling. They fear it because they fear being beaten. So they've all separated, left school and gone off in all directions. Every time I'm in Tsumkwe I see kids who aren't in school. They say they're tired of trying. They got along alright with the earlier teachers, but now there's no understanding with the new ones. All (the children) see is pain. And that's why they go about avoiding school these days. They don't want to be there.

A while back we went to the (school administrator) and asked, "If beating a child makes him leave school, what good does that do?" And all he said was "Mmm". So we said, "Misbehaving is one thing. If a child acts badly on many occasions, and the teacher discusses it with the parents so they understand each other, well, okay, go on and hit the child. But don't just beat him as an ordinary thing!" Sometimes they beat them for very small things. They don't even tell the child why. They don't even speak to the father about it.

If the child learns some things but doesn't learn others, you shouldn't just beat him, but tell him what he hasn't learned. You say, "This is the name of this," and you teach him along, teach him along, and then finally you ask him if he has learned the thing. ... If instead you go around beating the children, pretty soon you'll see they'll all be gone. This is how we tried to talk to the school administrator. But he persisted and finally we gave up.

But if the children DID get good schooling? Some of them could get work in hospitals, medical work, and some could teach children in schools, and some could be police, and some could work in offices and do secretarial work; there'd be men's work and women's work. Or they could have shops, or some could learn to work on machines, machines that build trucks, or [welding] machines that work with fire, because these days people don't just do one thing but do lots of kinds of things. Some are truck people and others are welders and some work on truck machines and others keep hostels for school children. Some could go to work for the Government in another area, maybe in waterworks, or

some might be in agriculture, and many of them might want to work in water detection and borehole drilling.

If they had a chance to learn these things, they'd know how to do them. My heart burns for them to learn. That's how our work would go forward. (Tsamkxao †Oma, transcript of audio recording made by Megan Biesele, 1987)

During 1991 the newly independent nation of Namibia made a commitment to support minority-language education for the first three years of school. This commitment was partly made because of an internationalist perspective on ethnicity fostered by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) leadership on its return from exile. This commitment was also partly made because of the historical circumstances of separate development which was applied during the period of South Africa's illegal mandate over South West Africa. At the time of the country's independence eleven 'national' languages were in use. Ironically, however, this commitment to minority education also owed at least something to lessons learned from an opposite educational policy implemented in Botswana.

At the time, the new Namibian director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Richard Shortlidge, who was transferred to Windhoek from Gaborone, shared a mission of fostering minority-language education with other involved parties in the new Namibia. In Shortlidge's view, Botswana's educational language policies had contributed to an increased marginalisation of minority groups. This view coincided well with that of the Namibian Education Minister, Nahas Angula, who had opened the way for Jul'hoansi to form one of several recognised national language pilot projects in education.

At the same time, the Jul'hoan people themselves were growing aware of the power of media and of their own need for the tools of literacy. The world literacy experience, has affirmed that the most effective approach to literacy and education is through the mother tongue and then by generalising these skills, after the first three or four years, to a national language. This experience supported an additive and not a subtractive bilingual approach to education (Hays, 2007, 2016). During the time of independence, where English succeeded Afrikaans in Namibia, the Jul'hoansi, like many other minority groups, were anxious to develop their English abilities as well as a written form of their own language.

The pilot Village Schools Project called for the participation of the Jul'hoan communities to decide what they wanted to include from their own tradition, in developing the Jul'hoan literature in the form of enrichment materials for their children's curriculum. This approach is known as 'self-literacy' in international educational circles (S. Yearwood, personal communication to M.Biesele, May, 18, 1989). To begin with, a class of sixteen teachers from the communities were trained to teach at five local schools. The schools were located in villages which had been strategically chosen to maximise parental and community involvement from families related to the students. This and other ideas of the Nyae Nyae Village Schools

Project were further developed in consultation with the Nyae Nyae community members. The Nyae Nyae residents concurred with the educators who had identified the unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environment of the few schools which had formerly been available to Ju|'hoan children, as the major contributing factors to their high drop-out and failure rates.

The Village Schools Project began officially in 1991, but was rooted much earlier in the community's desire for a meaningful education programme for the young Ju|'hoansi. Tsamkxao †Oma's statement in 1987, reflected some of the social problems that were encountered with the government school at Tsumkwe. Since 1978, this school had been increasingly staffed with white South African military personnel as teachers. A high drop-out rate had resulted from the corporal punishment, punitive rote instruction in Afrikaans, the terrible sanitary and social conditions in the hostel and a national situation in the San education levels, which determined that even those Ju|'hoan children who had completed their schooling in Tsumkwe, were unable to obtain employment due to the low level of the education which had been offered to them. The effective, permissive, traditional child socialisation and hands-on learning system which the Ju|'hoansi had enjoyed in the *n!ore* (traditional community: plural *n!oresi*) context, was the opposite of what the government system had offered at Tsumkwe during the apartheid system at that time.

The local NGO, the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, as a result of repeated requests by Nyae Nyae community members and their organisation, were determined to explore the possibility of a more appropriate educational system for the Ju|'hoan people. It was agreed that this system would be based in the *n!ore* where children could live with relatives and keep learning the traditional skills which their elders still wanted to teach them, while also becoming literate and employable. This fruitful combination became possible through the Village Schools Project. Assessment of the educational situation of San peoples in Namibia, including in Nyae Nyae (Bieseke, Lambert & Dickens, 1991), had revealed a dire need for relevant educational options to be made available. Kann (1991, p. 3) echoed this assessment in an in-depth Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) consultancy on San teacher training and literacy needs and described the situation as 'an educational crisis'.

Because the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia however, felt that it needed to promote the agricultural activities for food security first, a post for a horticultural instructor was created in 1989. This post was filled by Patrick Dickens. Dickens was not only a horticulturist but a linguistics student from the University of the Witwatersrand who had done fieldwork with !Xoo, another San language, in Botswana. After Dickens was interviewed and hired for the horticultural job, he modestly mentioned that he had some knowledge of the Khoesan languages and would like to learn and eventually teach written Ju|'hoansi at the development project in Nyae Nyae.

The result was the ambitious and effective Village Schools Project, which has become an example for appropriate, community-based mother-tongue education

projects in other parts of Southern Africa. Through the remaining three years of his life, Patrick Dickens worked tirelessly to render Jul'hoansi as a professionally documented and a professionally taught language. By basing his work on that of the linguist Jan Snyman of the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Snyman, 1969 and 1986), Dickens produced a practical, streamlined orthography which met international linguistic standards and the community's needs (Dickens, 1991). His *Jul'hoan-English, English-Jul'hoan Dictionary*, the manuscript of which had been completed by the time he died in October 1992, was published in 1994 (Dickens, 1994). It has become an indispensable tool of literacy and scholarship for the Jul'hoan community and for linguists who work with the Khoesan languages. The Jul'hoan community advanced the Jul'hoan agenda for effective national and international communication by formally adopting the Dickens' orthography.

Dickens also trained four young Jul'hoan men, who had already had some schooling in Afrikaans, to read and write Jul'hoansi using the new orthography. Dickens worked with these four men and the Nyae Nyae community on the Jul'hoan language materials while employed as the horticultural trainer by the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia. The community became the custodian of the linguistic work and the education programme which it had made possible. The Village Schools Project education programme may, therefore, be seen as a pioneer of the creation of a 'self-literate' population, helping to design curricula communally in a newly written language. The curriculum materials were then used with an approach described by educators in Australia and the United States of America as the 'whole-language pedagogy,' in which phonics were de-emphasised in favour of 'talk, real reading of real texts, reading to students, having them write stories, then read them, then act them out ... borne out by research that writing actually helps people learn to read' (S. Yearwood, to M. Biesele, personal communication, May, 18, 1989).

In 1991, the Namibian Ministry of Education officially accepted Dickens' orthography for the use of Jul'hoan schooling. Biesele was at that time still the director of the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia and able to promote Jul'hoan education by explaining the concerns and goals of the Jul'hoan community to some of the government agents and donors who were the stakeholders in their future. At the same time, Biesele and Dickens were preparing Jul'hoan language texts as requested by the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative to be a part of the school curriculum. Since these activities were already active, the Jul'hoan language was accepted under the Namibian Basic Educational Reform Programme as the medium for a pilot project in curriculum development for five years (1991–1996).

It is important to note, that had the Jul'hoansi not initiated and established their community-based education programme by the time of Namibia's independence, they might have gone unnoticed in the general clamour of many groups for recognition. Not only did the Nyae Nyae community have a people's organisation which was already well-formed and operative, but they had mobilised a Namibian NGO as well as international interest and funding in support of their education programme.

They were partly able to do this because the literacy and early childhood education had been integrated as goals into their overall community development programme. International funders and Namibian government agencies saw this integration in a most positive light.

The Nyae Nyae community and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia could afford to set the precedent for a scholarly input into the Jul'hoan education because those who had begun it had volunteered their spare time to the development programme. It would have been difficult for the new government, either then or since, to lay the groundwork on its own for a minority language education. But the Ministry of Education was receptive to the work which had been done, in this case because the people themselves, through their own community organisation, their NGO and international funding, had a language and literacy programme on the brink of realisation.

SELF-LITERACY AND THE FIRST PHASE OF VILLAGE SCHOOLS PROJECT

One of the most exciting original intentions of this project was the community collaboration in the preparation of materials for 'self-literacy'. The curriculum work in Jul'hoansi had directly involved materials which had been developed by (1) scholars working within the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, (2) local people within the community, (3) the Education Team of the Village Schools Project, and (4) local teachers in the pilot project. These materials have included the orthography and dictionary updates along with the folktales, the oral history, the song texts used in readers for the primary school grades, and a numeracy booklet, among other genres. The student teachers had made tape recordings of older community members telling stories, and they transcribed the stories as group exercises in the Jul'hoan literacy sessions. Creative writing workshops in Jul'hoansi were also met with great enthusiasm by the student teachers.

The challenge of dovetailing the Jul'hoan learning system with the developing educational system in Namibia, arose after 1990. It was approached through an innovative two-year set of pre-school pilot projects carried out for Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia on a volunteer basis by Melissa Heckler, an American educator and librarian who had specialised in early childhood education. Based on Heckler's experience and the success of previous projects incorporating high-level community involvement and a holistic education in the mother tongue, a general proposal was written for the Jul'hoan education to the Ministry of Education (Bieseke, Dickens & Beake, 1991). As a result of this proposal, the groundwork was laid for the eventual accreditation of the five village schools and of the local teachers. Two Jul'hoan teachers were hired by the national school system on an in-service training structure, and they began their lengthy careers at the Tsumkwe Junior Secondary School. The dialogue between the two nationally-employed teachers and the other local Jul'hoan teachers, who were eventually employed in the five Nyae

Nyae schools, was most important in the eventual acceptance of the Village Schools Project in 2001, as a genuine component of Namibian education.

This outcome grew directly from the substantial contributions to the Village Schools Project by the late Ulla Kann, a Swedish consultant to the Namibian Ministry of Education who had also worked extensively among the Remote Area Dwellers (mostly San) in Botswana. Ulla Kann's 1991 consultancy on the Village Schools Project for SIDA (the Swedish International Development Agency) and for Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, covered the interlocking issues of language and orthography, primary education and adult literacy, teachers and teacher training, and the curriculum and materials production. Titled *Where the Sand is the Book: Education for Everyone in the Nyae Nyae area; A Challenge*, her report focused on the importance of the local language education in the development of critical thinking and the consequent upcoming need for the training of local teachers (Kann, 1991). Kann concluded from her research that the Village Schools Project had to strive to prepare Jul'hoan children and adults to participate in the national education system. As an educator, Ulla Kann suggested it was best not to develop a separate educational system for the Jul'hoansi (Kann, 1991).

What was also very important in the making of the bridge between the Village Schools Project and the national Namibian system, was the position of Education Coordinator created within Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia. This post, filled by Magdalena Broermann in 1991, ensured that the necessary liaison work would be done between the Ministry of Education, the donor agencies, the NGOs, the Colleges of Education, and other entities working within the same fields of interest. At the start, Broermann worked with Lesley Beake, the South African award-winning children's book writer and educator. Beake then collaborated alongside Biesele and Dickens in writing proposals which were important in the formation of the Village Schools Project. The aim was to produce sample desktop-published curriculum materials for testing during the first phase of the standardised mother tongue material development for the Jul'hoansi. Broermann was instrumental in arranging for the lengthy participation of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, of The Netherlands, to fund the start of the Jul'hoan language curriculum.

Biesele was actively involved during this period with the Jul'hoan people working towards a political, cultural, and linguistic self-determination, with projects ranging from community development to heritage preservation (see Biesele & Hitchcock, 2011). A high point of her work was the teaching of a creative writing class, in the Jul'hoan language, to the first group of literate Jul'hoan student teachers in 1992. The group translation techniques fostered during that class provided an unforgettable lesson in the adventure of group learning.

The five pilot schools of the Village Schools Project, along with the teachers from the Nyae Nyae communities, were enthusiastically received by the Jul'hoan people. Even before Patrick Dickens' death in 1992, the Village Schools Project was

praised by Southern African educators as a very successful San community education project. Though the project had for many years remained a struggle, practically, politically and philosophically, by March 2008 it was clear that this ambitious pilot project had borne fruit as a model in the wider Southern Africa region. In a major poster exhibit on the Village Schools Project which had been created by the staff and students at !Khwatla, a San people's learning centre in South Africa, a poster stated that the Village Schools Project was 'perhaps the most progressive and best-known minority education initiative in Southern Africa'.

COMMUNITY HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN NYAE NYAE

Collaborative efforts drawn from academic, technical, and practical expertise, were necessary to facilitate an on-site Ju|'hoan literacy development. Such efforts included the provision of computer literacy training, in order to encourage the production of the mother tongue educational materials and to stimulate a digital literacy tradition which facilitated a long-term language documentation and preservation. This training was undertaken under a general request articulated to Bieseke and Dickens in the late 1980s by the Ju|'hoan people's organisation and the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative (now the Nyae Nyae Conservancy). These requests have later been reaffirmed several times since 2000, by the Education Committee of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy.

In 1990, working with Dickens and his Village Schools Project trainees, Bieseke began to turn 'anthropological' folklore collections into educational materials, thereby returning the collection to the people in the form of school curriculum materials for the Village Schools Project. Due to the technological developments in more recent years, the possibility for an even closer collaboration in the development of learning materials with Ju|'hoan adults and children, in simultaneous promotion of their own heritage preservation and language development, has become a reality.

Since 1987, a Ju|'hoan San people's organisation, the Nyae Nyae Conservancy of northern Namibia, has made requests to the Kalahari Peoples Fund for mother tongue Ju|'hoan texts. The basic need for literacy primers in some minority languages, including that of the Ju|'hoansi, was addressed after the country's independence to some extent, by the government. The Kalahari Peoples Fund agreed with the Nyae Nyae Conservancy's Education Committee that without reading materials beyond the basic primers, the Ju|'hoansi language would fall out of use as children became literate in English. Thus, in the interest of the linguistic and cultural preservation, the Kalahari Peoples Fund began to help Ju|'hoan community members in developing, publishing and evaluating enrichment materials to promote the Ju|'hoan reading and writing skills over the first three years of school and beyond. Teachers and other local Ju|'hoan speakers have been involved in each phase of the project, which has an ultimate goal of encouraging the publication of works of all kinds by Ju|'hoan authors.

THE JUL'HOAN TRANSCRIPTION PROJECT

In 2002, a project in the cultural heritage preservation, language development, and linguistic training for local Jul'hoan people, was spun off from the Village Schools Project. The Kalahari Peoples Fund, an American non-profit organisation directed by Biesele, began to support projects which facilitated language documentation and fed into the Village Schools Project. Tired of the few flimsy mimeographed and desktop-published curriculum materials available in Jul'hoansi, the Village Schools Project teachers and other Namibian educators asked for attractively published schoolbooks in their mother tongue. Funding from the United States of America was provided through the National Science Foundation, the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities, the Wenner Gren Foundation and the Kalahari Peoples Fund. This funding assisted the Jul'hoansi on a heritage conservation project called the Jul'hoan Transcription Group, by providing them with printed curriculum and archival materials from their own culture. The project produced a number of materials through the Namibian National Institute for Educational Development's syllabus, curriculum work with the Jul'hoan Curriculum Committee and the Trafford First Voices Publishing Program, British Columbia, Canada (Biesele, 2009). Some of these materials were contemporary essays written by the teacher trainees in the creative writing course which Biesele facilitated in 1992.

One critical area where the Village Schools Project managed to keep a space open for creativity, was in promoting the idea of a Balanced Literacy (otherwise known as Integrated Literacy in Southern Africa). Balanced Literacy is an international reading and writing programme which coincides with the egalitarian values of the Jul'hoansi and their deep belief in the value of children's work. In particular, there has been a realisation that genuinely creative literature and non-fiction learning materials had to be produced for readers beyond the first three years, to enable a tradition of literacy to develop into adult literacy. To accomplish literacy development, the Jul'hoansi who were literate in their mother tongue, had to be equipped, through tools and practice, to generate their own written materials. Authoritative text production has, therefore, demanded the creation of a political, social, and technological environment to foster the organic intellectual growth.

Accordingly, from June to September in 2003, several training and language research activities took place in Nyae Nyae. These involved a number of electronic techniques of creativity and language preservation, including the documentation of life histories and contemporary stories. These were both oral and written and were produced in a creative writing workshop. These stories were later transcribed from digital audio recordings and were supplemented by videos. Notes on the equipment and the approaches similar to those used in this process, have often appeared in the journal *Multilingual Computing*⁹⁹ on similar projects in Navaho (a native American language primarily spoken in the Southwestern United States), and other minority

⁹⁹ Available online: www.multilingual.com

languages (Bernard, 1992). 'Best practice' in such projects is often reported and updated online in The LINGUIST List/E-MELD and by the Preservation and Access Division of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Those who were associated with the creation of the language materials for the Nyae Nyae Village Schools Project are still constantly attempting to use these best practices to best serve the educational needs of the Jul'hoan people.

The initial Jul'hoan texts which were developed in the project, were recorded between 1970 and the present day, ranging from folklore, dreams, political meetings, oral history to narratives of trance healing. Later, interviews and conversations about the Nyae Nyae Conservancy were recorded as well. These focused on the environment, land rights, and new issues in governance and representation. These interviews were transcribed and translated with precision by a collaborative team which contained computer literate native speakers who had been originally trained by the Village Schools Project. These texts are not only valuable research tools for anthropologists, archaeologists, and linguists, but have valuable archival and curriculum materials for the Jul'hoansi themselves. These texts have contributed to a movement which is now developing among the indigenous people in many parts of the world, to document and develop their own culture and language for educational, political, and economic goals.

The Jul'hoan Transcription Group uses an innovative workshop format for the processing of authoritative texts. This is made possible not only by the new technology but by the 'old' technology of collaborative learning which was traditional among the Jul'hoansi and other San. The Jul'hoan Transcription Group has become a comprehensive, contextualised, and critical language project, building on the original foundation work of Dickens and his Jul'hoan students and on Bieseles's collected materials (which have now been digitised). Transcriptions were first carried out only when Bieseles and her technical assistants could be in Tsumkwe. Since 2006, however, transcription work has been ongoing throughout the year under the supervision of local individuals such as Dam Botes Debe. Debe was for some time, the Jul'hoan librarian at the Tsumkwe Community Learning and Development Centre which was established by the Namibia Association of Norway. The association had a San Education Project based at the Community Learning and Development Centre, and outgrowths of this project work closely with both the Kalahari Peoples Fund and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia to foster the community education in Nyae Nyae.

The uniquely productive and authoritative heart of the Jul'hoan Transcription Group's work, is its collaborative workshop format. To add to the project's efficiency, the NGOs in support of their work have been able to construct, with community request, an internet connection at the Community Learning and Development Centre in Tsumkwe. This connection has allowed an exchange of sound files and translation documentation, to move quickly and efficiently between the trainees and scholars outside Namibia to increase the rate of publication and online dissemination.

As a part of the Jul'hoan Transcription Group, the Jul'hoan trainees Kagece Kallie N!ani and Dam Botes Debe have received training in computer literacy, language preservation, and linguistic techniques. By 2008, the number of experienced trainees had risen to eight, including two women. These were all keen to continue the tradition of language development work. At present there are four transcribers, all of whom have had at least ten years of work experience in the project namely, Tsemkgao !Ui, !Ui N!aici, Beesa Boo, and !Ai!ae !Kunta. What they have learned from the Jul'hoan Transcription Project may be regarded as a substantial contribution to the development of human resources for the study of Jul'hoansi and other San languages.

LIBRARY OUTREACH, KALAHARI PEOPLES NETWORK, AND OTHER LITERATURE PROJECTS

The Library Outreach Project which was started by the early childhood educator, Melissa Heckler, in Tsumkwe has also provided an appreciation of reading among the Village Schools teachers and the Nyae Nyae public. For decades, Heckler has returned from the United States of America each year to run the Village Schools Project teacher workshops with Bruce Parcher, the teacher trainer for the village schools who was first installed by the Namibia Association of Norway (NAMAS), and now works for The University Centre for Studies in Namibia (TUCSIN) Tsumkwe, facilitating a comprehensive training programme that has succeeded NAMAS. Heckler and Lesley Beake have also provided years of enrichment programmes in the form of storytelling workshops and materials creation. In addition, Beake has created the acclaimed Kalahari Peoples Network website,¹⁰⁰ which has given young Jul'hoansi an outlet for their creative writing. With assistance from Hugh Clarke and Mary Cadogan, Beake has carried out nine major workshops in writing, editing, website management and social networking for San people of Namibia, starting in Tsumkwe, as well as in Botswana and South Africa.

Lesley Beake (to M. Biesele, personal communication, April 2, 2011) deftly describes the Kalahari Peoples Network project:

For millennia, Kalahari people have been expert networkers in their own spoken languages. For three years now there has been another kind of network available to them, an Internet one that works as well although it may not be as personal. It is supported and maintained by the Kalahari Peoples Network (KPN), part of the Kalahari Peoples Fund that was formed over thirty years ago by anthropologists.

This year, the ninth workshop of KPN was held in Western Cape at three different venues, at !Khwa ttu San Cultural and Educational Centre (an hour out of Cape Town on the coastal road), at Clanwilliam Living Landscape Project in the Cederberg, and at the University of

¹⁰⁰ Kalahari Peoples Network is a project of the Kalahari Peoples Fund: www.kalaharipeoples.org

Cape Town (UCT). It culminated with participants attending the 'Courage of ǀKabbo' Conference at UCT hosted by the Centre for Curating the Archive.

There were several aims of the 2011 workshop.

- To improve writing and computer skills to enable better communication between individuals and communities, and with the rest of the world; much of which takes a keen, and often misinformed, interest in Kalahari communities.
- To encourage writing as a means of documenting the changes and huge societal upheaval that has happened in the lives of these young people and their elders.

This is the KPN project 'Documenting Now, the stories of our lives.' As many as possible of these stories from the workshop were published on the website, immediately after they were written.

Another exciting development is the Kalahari Peoples Network's informal partnership with The University Centre for Studies in Namibia (TUCSIN) Tsumkwe, mentioned above, which began in July 2013, with the help of Melissa Heckler, Bruce Parcher and the anthropologist Richard Lee. Beatrice Sandelowsky and Andreas Wienecke of TUCSIN completed the purchase of the Tsumkwe Lodge in early December 2013, to provide a campus and income generation for a multipurpose education centre for the Ju|'hoan and other students from the area. This centre is intended to house and support many other Kalahari Peoples Network-related education projects, all in Tsumkwe, including support for a secondary school distance education through the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). The Library Outreach Project to San learners which is based at the Community Learning and Development Center; and the Youth Transcription Project, is now called the Ju|'hoan Mother Tongue Literacy Project, an outgrowth of the Ju|'hoan Transcription Group. During 2014, the start of this new Tsumkwe education centre was celebrated through a San education conference and book launches for the illustrated *Ju|'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary*. This was workshopped with the Ju|'hoan Transcription Group, then the linguistics PhD candidate Kerry Jones and Tsemkgao Fanie Cwi and was published by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Press that same year.

The development of the *Ju|'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary* began in 2012 during a field trip which took place in the Tsumkwe region in July and August of that year. The initial concept was brought to Biese by Jones in 2011 at the 'Courage of ǀKabbo' conference which was held in Cape Town. Jones' initial idea, was to learn about appropriate methodologies and practices for researchers among the San communities while at the same time collecting entries for a very basic Ju|'hoan children's dictionary. Upon arrival in Tsumkwe this initial concept began to grow organically as it was suggested to members of the Ju|'hoan Transcription Group, members of the community as well as to Heckler and Parcher.

The original intent was only to have one entry for each letter of the alphabet. This Western approach to the development of a children's dictionary was, however, soon replaced with a collaborative effort which suited the needs of the community as well as their approach to learning. Suggestions were made by both young and old regarding the kinds of entries the Jul'hoansi would like to learn about and have included in their first children's dictionary. The input came from the village school teachers, the young students themselves as well as elders in the community. These community discussions highlighted what was important for their children to know as well as other children who would like to learn about the Jul'hoan language and culture. The combination and collaboration of this information resulted in the development of a thematic dictionary, which interestingly included entries which were not found in Dickens' dictionary (Dickens, 1994).

The number of themes suggested as well as the number of lexical entries for each theme had to be reduced in order to make the project manageable. Suggestions, ideas and concepts were never lacking and eventually the brainstorming and suggestion of ideas had to be put on hold, in order to move forward with its publication. The overwhelming response from the members of the community was a testament to the importance of community driven literacy projects rather than to the externally driven projects.

After much deliberation and consultation, which was facilitated and managed by co-author Cwi, it was agreed that there would be seven themes in the dictionary namely: Animals; Birds; Insects, reptiles and creepy crawlies; Home and the family; Hunt; Gather and Dance. Each theme would include approximately 25 lexical entries and would be in alphabetical order according to the Jul'hoan entries. Furthermore, each entry would be translated first into Afrikaans, and then into English, making the dictionary a trilingual children's dictionary. The purpose of the translation of the lexical entries into Afrikaans and English was to make Jul'hoan children aware of the names of these entries in the other languages of education to which they would be exposed after moving from the village schools into the mainstream government education in Tsumkwe and the surrounding areas.

The translation of the entries had additional benefits not only for children's education but for adult education as well. Many Jul'hoan adults, if they had received any formal education at all in the past, were offered this opportunity in either Afrikaans or English. This meant that these adult learners could use the Afrikaans and English building blocks to literacy which they already had and interact and use these while engaging with the *Jul'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary* to begin learning the written form of Jul'hoansi. Over and above these benefits, the translation of the lexical entries into Afrikaans and English also made the text accessible to adults and children who were not Jul'hoan speakers but were interested in learning more about the Jul'hoan language and culture. It was clearly expressed that in order for Jul'hoansi to survive, education needed to take place not only with the Jul'hoansi themselves but with other children from other language and cultural backgrounds, in order to make them aware of the Jul'hoansi.

Once the lexical entries for each theme had been selected, and translated, the representation of each theme then came into consideration. Again, a collaborative effort was suggested where members of the community who were creative but not necessarily literate, could also be included in the project by providing illustrations for each lexical entry in the text as well as other subsidiary illustrations. A total of eleven illustrators, both men and women, young and old, provided images for the publication. The result was a rich product, both linguistically and visually designed, to facilitate as much learning as possible.

Examples from the *Ju|'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary* can be seen in the Figures which follow: Figure 19.1 is the front cover of the publication.¹⁰¹ The cover provides the title in all three languages, Ju|'hoansi, Afrikaans and English as well as illustrations of animals found in the Tsumkwe area and their matching spoor. The village school teachers felt that these illustrations would be attractive to their children and provide information which could be used during a lesson. The incorporation of an ostrich eggshell which surrounds the hunter in the centre of the front cover, was specifically chosen to show how the ostrich egg was an object at the centre of the lives of the Tsumkwe Ju|'hoansi. The ostrich egg is seen as a food source, a traditional water carrier, is used in the production of many traditional items of jewellery and clothing and is a valuable item used in trade. The illustration of a Ju|'hoan hunter was specifically placed in the centre of the front cover to represent the Ju|'hoansi's legendary traditional hunting and tracking skills. The hunter was then surrounded by animals that he could track or hunt.



Figure 19.1 Front cover of the *Ju|'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary*

¹⁰¹ Note: The *Ju|'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary* is a colour publication but for the purposes of this book chapter the image samples were provided in black and white.

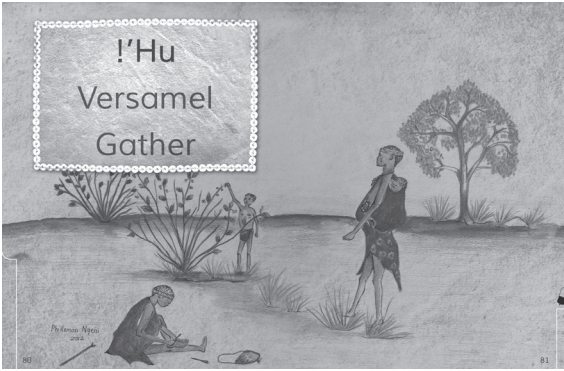


Figure 19.2 Cover page for the theme 'Gather'

Figure 19.2 provides an example of one of the seven themes covered in the *Jul'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary*, !'Hu (Jul'hoansi), Versamel (Afrikaans), Gather (English). This theme cover page provides a veld scene of Jul'hoan women gathering veld food with their children. The illustrator has purposefully included items in the illustration of traditional and cultural significance. As an example, the traditional dress which the women and children wear, a digging stick, an animal skin bag, the long metal needles used for taking thorns out of one's feet, the traditional jewellery and headband, a container made from tortoise shell which is used to hold powdered perfume, the raisin bushes and a corky monkey-orange tree. All of these items are mentioned as individual lexical entries within this theme in the dictionary. The overall theme cover page provides a snapshot of such entries in a typical traditional gathering scene between the Jul'hoan women and children.

Figure 19.3 is an example of a lexical entry from the theme Animals, ll'hao (Jul'hoansi), ratel (Afrikaans), honey badger (English). The honey badger is an animal which Jul'hoan children are familiar with as it is found in the Tsumkwe area and is known for its tenacious and fearless attitude despite its small stature.

Figure 19.4 is an example of a lexical entry found in the Bird theme, !huma-nlai-g!ka (Jul'hoansi), hoepoep (Afrikaans), African hoopoe (English). The African hoopoe is a bird typically found in the Kalahari and is known for its distinctive call and 'crown'.

Figure 19.5 is an example of a lexical entry from the theme Insects, reptiles and creepy crawlies: llo'a (Jul'hoansi), skilpad (Afrikaans), tortoise (English). The tortoise is a creature commonly found in the Tsumkwe area and is a very popular character in traditional folklore.

Figure 19.6 is an example of a lexical entry from the theme Home and the family: dongikara (Jul'hoansi), donkiekar (Afrikaans), donkey cart (English). The word for 'donkey cart' in Jul'hoansi is a borrowing from Afrikaans but it is a unique mode of transport to the Kalahari people.

Figure 19.7 is an example of a lexical entry from the theme 'Hunt': dsuu-n!u (Jul'hoansi), volstruiseier (Afrikaans), ostrich egg (English). Ostrich eggs converted



Figure 19.3 An example of an entry from the theme 'Animals'



Figure 19.4 An example of an entry from the theme 'Birds'

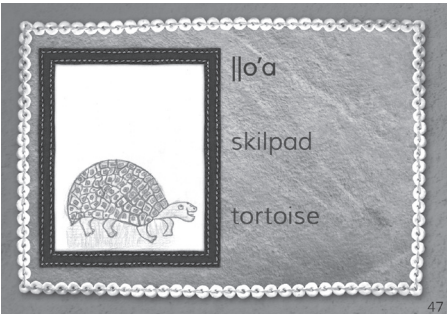


Figure 19.5 An example of an entry from the theme 'Insects, reptiles and creepy crawlies'

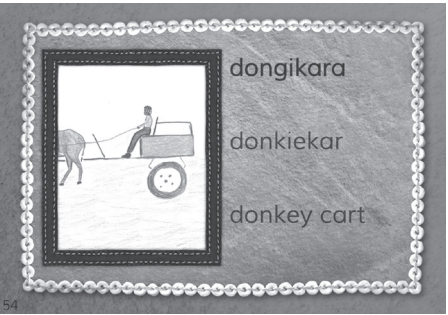


Figure 19.6 An example of an entry from the theme 'Home and the family'

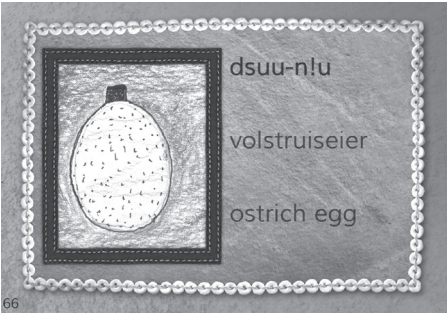


Figure 19.7 An example of an entry from the theme 'Hunt'

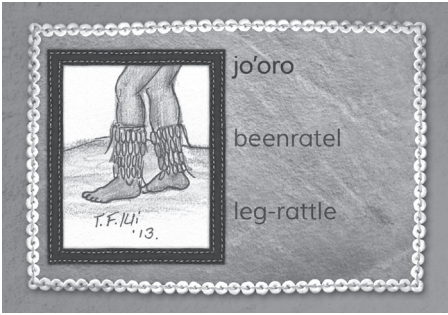


Figure 19.8 An example of an entry from the theme 'Dance'

into water carriers are important to the Jul'hoansi, especially when out in the veld hunting or gathering in the summer's heat.

Lastly, Figure 19.8 is an example of a lexical entry from the theme Dancing: jo'oro (Jul'hoansi), beenratel (Afrikaans), leg-rattle (English). These particular leg-rattles are worn during a traditional trance dance or healing dance, which is an intrinsic part of Jul'hoan culture.

After the initial field trip in 2012, Jones then returned to South Africa with some 200 odd Jul'hoansi entries, all translated into Afrikaans and English with accompanying illustrations, to begin the digitisation and compilation of the publication. This process included the editing and proofing of the Afrikaans translations, assisted by Dietloff van den Berg and Loriane Prinsloo from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Jones then returned to Tsumkwe in 2013 with the first printed draft of the dictionary for the editing and approval of the community. The response was overwhelmingly positive by young and old. The teachers from the village schools were particularly excited to have the text in their classrooms. The editing process went smoothly with the help of !Ui Charlie N!aici from the Jul'hoan Transcription Group and the American based linguist Amanda Miller of the Ohio State University.

While in Tsumkwe in 2013, Melissa Heckler suggested that high definition (HD) video clips should be made of each lexical entry, to help those who would like to learn Jul'hoansi and were perhaps intimidated or confused by the production of the click sounds. The illustrators of each entry then became involved in the process of the production of the HD video clips through the use of each artist's illustration and their own voices. The co-ordination of this process was done by Jones and Cwi primarily in central Tsumkwe.

Upon completion of the edited text and the documentation by video, of each lexical entry, the project was left with a huge burden namely, the printing and distribution. Printing was the most expensive part of the publication of this text and without funding or a publisher, the final product could not be realised. Due to the unusual nature of the text, the team struggled to find a publisher willing to take the risk of publishing a multimedia product in an endangered Namibian language. Finally, after several submissions of the manuscript to various publishers, UKZN Press agreed to take on the project. A specialised publishing agreement was created to protect the community and the community's interests with regard to such a unique text with so many contributors. The UKZN Press then went the extra mile by supporting the idea of an interactive DVD with all the HD video clips to accompany the publication as well as to provide marketing and distribution support.

The problem of purchasing a certain number of copies of the dictionary at a reduced price, to make these available to the Jul'hoan speaking community in the Tsumkwe region, was another challenge which had to be overcome. In the final hour, the Namibia Association of Norway provided funding for over 400 copies of the dictionary to be purchased and delivered to Tsumkwe. In 2014, after three years of collaboration, the project finally came to a full circle and Biesele, Jones and

Cwi could deliver the sponsored dictionaries to the village schools, living museums and community members who were involved in the production of the dictionary.

Once delivery and consent had been gained from the Jul'hoansi of Tsumkwe, the book launches took place in Tsumkwe, Windhoek, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Kimberley. The response to the publication was well met by the Jul'hoan speakers, educators, academic scholars, linguists, anthropologists, writers, librarians and the media. So much so that in 2015, Cwi and Jones, along with UKZN Press, were awarded with a literary prize known as a *Woordveertjie* (Word Feather)¹⁰² by the *Afrikaanse Taal-en Kultuurvereniging* (ATKV)¹⁰³ in the category: *woordwystoekening* (language reference book). The prize money won by Cwi and Jones was used to purchase more copies of the dictionary from the UKZN Press at a reduced rate for the new grade one children in the village schools. Delivery was made in August 2016. In each year, however, the funds for the purchase and delivery of more stock for the Tsumkwe area is a challenge.

Recapitulating the many activities leading up to the current state of education and literacy in the Nyae Nyae and other areas in Southern Africa, where speakers of the Khoesan languages are found, is complex. The provision of accurate and culturally appropriate materials has required, minimally, the creation and adoption of an orthography, a grammar, the founding and development of a community-based education project as a matrix for literacy, the technical advances (email, laptops, digital recording and transcribing equipment), the community consultation and training, a comprehensive provision of computer-literacy training, and a constant technical updating for best practice. In the case of the Jul'hoansi, these activities have been carried out over the past 27 years through a complex infrastructural and funding collaboration which involved academic, non-profit, and government funding sources. None of the activities would have been possible, however, without the sound linguistic foundation in the Jul'hoan language which was provided by Patrick Dickens.

Of utmost importance has been the participation of the closely involved local communities, organisations, and committees themselves, including the (Namibian) Jul'hoan Curriculum Committee, which brings together the three Jul'hoan dialect areas in Namibia; and the Namibian Government's Intersectoral Task Force on Educationally Marginalized Children which merges the government and NGO entities involved in education for San and other marginalised children. These two groups provide instructive examples to similar San literacy projects in Botswana. In turn, the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (Botswana), in conjunction with the Panos Institute (United Kingdom), the Bernard van Leer Foundation (The Netherlands), and the University of Botswana San/Basarwa Research Project, has enabled community-based oral history projects and publications in San and Khoekhoe languages in Botswana which now serve as models for similar

¹⁰² A reference to the phrase 'a feather in your cap' meaning, 'an achievement or something to be proud of'.

¹⁰³ Afrikaans Language and Culture Association.

projects in Namibia (cf. Chumbo & Mmaba, 2002). In late 2004, a publication prepared from the oral traditions of San communities, *Voices of the San*, was published to celebrate the ending of the United Nations Decade of Indigenous Peoples (Le Roux & White, 2004).

These developments are in line with those of similar projects in indigenous communities around the world. Jul'hoansi, so recently an isolated and unwritten language which was considered as an exotic and unlearnable language, even by its closest neighbours, will become in some sense a world language. The knowledge it contains will become available as far as the World Wide Web can carry it. The data from both audio recordings and isolated word recordings, is being registered and deposited according to international archival guidelines, and is archived locally in Tsumkwe as well as abroad. These resources will support not only research but also an ongoing community language development.

THE YOUTH TRANSCRIPTION PROJECT (YTP) AND THE FUTURE

In recent years, the Jul'hoan Transcription Group trainees have been asked to expand their programme. They have wanted to add a youth component to their work, so that younger people, especially young women, could receive training in transcription, translation, and other linguistic techniques. They have proposed to do the training themselves, in the spirit of 'each one teach one.'

Another important subsection of the work, was the addition of entries, coming out of the text work, to Patrick Dickens' *English-Jul'hoan, Jul'hoan-English Dictionary*. Biesele has collaborated with linguist Amanda Miller on this project. Miller and Biesele hope to co-edit an eventual re-issue of the dictionary with the Jul'hoan speaker Hacky Kgami Gcao, who was chosen for winning an essay contest in the Jul'hoan language on the topic 'The Importance of the Jul'hoan Dictionary'. Here is a Jul'hoan quote translated into English, taken from Gcao's written translation of his essay:

Learning together, at Baraka, gave me skill in writing the Jul'hoan language. The training in Baraka was what up-graded me to be able to write the Jul'hoan language. From Baraka, I came back with an experience of teaching adult Literacy Promoters. In those years, I was very good in Jul'hoan writing and reading.

I'm also attending the Jul'hoan Transcriptions Project. It's very important, and also a good way to learn. I'm also able to write the Jul'hoan Language now at the computer. I think that to write and read your own language is a very important skill to teach our younger generation. Our younger generation must start early with our Jul'hoan language, how to read and write it. I believe that when our young children know how to read and write our Jul'hoan language, all will be developed and like white people and the other groups of people in Namibia.

I'm very happy that we now have schools at our villages, that can teach our young generation to read and write Ju|'hoansi. I think that if the children can read and write the Ju|'hoan language, they will be able to compile books in our own language.

Thanks to the technology which has finally caught up with the enthusiasm of the Ju|'hoan people for both the preservation of the old knowledge and the learning of new things, this quote will certainly not be the last written quote in the Ju|'hoan language which we will see from Nyae Nyae. Literacy products are not the only items coming out of the Nyae Nyae community heritage preservation activities. Trainees are digitally recording older people's historical stories and folktales, chronicles of how they themselves became healers, and accounts of the composition of medicine songs and how they were transmitted, by teaching and sharing, across the landscape. The trainees are making videos of these activities as well, and these videos will go into their own archives along with the decades of sound files made in the earlier years. The Nyae Nyae Tape Archive, now fully digitised, includes records of the early meetings of their people's organisation such as the writing of its Constitution and the historic meeting with the Ovaherero at Xamsa in 1991. The Ju|'hoan Transcription Group is now processing these files for a permanent record. Increasingly, film projects will put video cameras into the hands of the Nyae Nyae people so they can tell their own contemporary stories visually as well as aurally.

These activities have been characterised by a high degree of collaboration between the young and old. Some young people, though they have had the chance to become literate, do not know the old lore and are finding the knowledge of non-literate elders indispensable to the creation of good community records. The following account of a work session with transcription trainees is a case in point:

In June and July 2006, in Tsumkwe, six young Ju|'hoan trainees, who had been trained in computer literacy and in the transcription of their only-recently-written language, were hard at work on donated laptops. They were transcribing and translating, from digital sound files, hundreds of hours of folktales, healing narratives, and other materials recorded in their language as long ago as in 1970. At one point in a detailed phenomenological description of the mechanisms of traveling on the 'threads of the sky' to God's village, which Ju|'hoan healers do in an altered state of consciousness, a trainee sighed, 'If only |Kunta Boo [the raconteur on the old sound file] were here to help explain all this to us so that we could get it written down right!' At that moment, the trainees looked towards the doorway of the community library where they were working. There stood old |Kunta himself, having trekked in from his far-off camp when he heard about the project. Without further ado, |Kunta and his wife N!ae sat down at the computers in the midst of the young people and didn't get up for two solid weeks, except for breaks or to go to bed at night.

They went through the sound files with the trainees word for word. Excitement erupted around this collaborative process which, along with transcriptions, began to generate many esoteric vocabulary words for the trainees to use in updating their dictionary. The result was over 200 pages of authoritative, annotated, richly nuanced, transcribed and translated Jul'hoan material which answered many questions which outsiders have had about the people's famous, but mysterious, healing dance. When !Kunta and N!ae were leaving to go back to their village, one of the trainees was moved to read them a speech he had written, which contained the words 'We young people could never have done this work correctly without you, our elders.'

An interest in producing their imaginary and historical life stories; thoughtful and critical essays, moving and still images, must be seen as an ongoing part of the complex legacy left in Nyae Nyae by the collaboration of concerned outsiders with the ongoing Nyae Nyae people's movement. Though there is much which is challenging, difficult, and even tragic about life in Nyae Nyae today, there is also a cultural revitalisation, and it is far more than just conservation of a past heritage. It is creative, enveloping with enthusiasm and critiques the new realities which the Jul'hoansi see as they go forward. Surely these are the basic ingredients for an organic development of a written documentation and expression.

Will there be written literature in Jul'hoansi? With the many challenges facing the Jul'hoansi and indigenous peoples like them, we cannot give a definite answer. But projects like the interlocking group of efforts in Nyae Nyae which are described above, aiming to propel literacy efforts for and with an indigenous people towards a truly lasting and meaningful status, must be nurtured, to grow along with political empowerment and other human rights. We leave you with a message from the contributors of the *Jul'hoan Children's Picture Dictionary*: '!Ae !kau dharia ke ka kokxui juasi kosin si oosi.' (Hold your people, your language and your culture tightly together).

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Multilingual children's books in an independent Namibia: The emergence of a new literature

Andree-Jeanne Töttemeyer

INTRODUCTION

Namibia is a country geographically twice as large as Germany, but with a population of only 2.4 million people. There are 13 written languages in Namibia, plus more than 16 dialects for which no orthography exists (Maho, 1998, pp. 22–23; 26–55; 99–100). Namibia was colonised, first by the Germans and thereafter, by the South Africans for over 100 years. Thus, the colonial language, German became one of the 12 local languages of the country. English and Afrikaans were declared official languages in Namibia after World War I but English, during the pre-independence period, had hardly been spoken or used, while Afrikaans had become the dominant lingua franca in the country. This entrenchment of Afrikaans had come about mainly because Afrikaans had already been enjoying a long history in Namibia during pre-colonial times. Cape Dutch, the forerunner of Afrikaans, had been brought to Namibia by small groups of the Orlam and Nama tribes since 1760, emigrating from the Northern Cape into Namibia, i.e. some 250 years ago (Stals, 2001, pp. 8–14).

During the South African occupation (1918–1989), mainly mother tongue education was used in the primary schools while Afrikaans was phased in to become the main medium of instruction in the secondary schools. English and the diverse mother tongues, depending on the area, were taken as subjects until the matric level (equivalent to Grade 12). Afrikaans has thus been functioning, and to a large extent,

is still functioning in Namibia, as a medium of communication not only for a trans-cultural and trans-lingual understanding but also for a trans-border understanding.

The multicultural and multilingual reality of Namibian society was a challenge to the new democratic government established at independence in 1990. Since then, a new language and educational policy influenced the production and content of Namibian children's literature. Publishing programmes have changed since the implementation of English as the main or sole medium of instruction in Namibian schools. This decision was made by government even though, in 1990, English could be spoken by only 5% of the total population and was the mother tongue of only 1.9% of all Namibians in 2001 (Republic of Namibia, 2003, pp. 47–48).

Namibian publishers have been increasingly reluctant to publish in the indigenous languages, also referred to as local languages, with the result that potential authors of children's literature do not feel motivated to write in these languages. The publication of mainly school textbooks which are mostly in English, has become a threat to the publication of trade books for children in the local languages. Most trade books published for children for general or recreational reading in Namibia today, are either in English or in German. It is interesting to note that although German is spoken by only 1% of the population, German books sell relatively well because of the tourist support and interest.

THE NAMIBIAN CHILDREN'S BOOK FORUM

The Namibian Children's Book Forum, founded in 1988, was one of very few organisations that continued to promote the various Namibian languages through its programmes. The aims of the organisation are to develop a reading culture and the production of children's books in all Namibian languages. Projects included the National Readathon, which is an annual reading festival in the schools and the Namibian Children's Book Award. It has also given awards for books which were published outside Namibia provided these books presented a Namibian theme. Some were written by Namibians or by foreigners who had spent many years in the country. Dorian Haarhoff's *Desert December*, published in Cape Town by Songololo in 1991, is an example of such a text. It is a delicate Christmas story of love and endurance unfolding in the Kuiseb Canyon of the Namib Desert. The book received an Honourable Mention for its narrative text.

New Namibia Books

There was a boom in children's books in English from 1990. Two new publishing houses, New Namibia Books and the Out of Africa branch of Gamsberg Macmillan, contributed to this growth. In 1991, New Namibia Books published *Song of the Namib*, a Namibian Children's Book Award winner, including lyrical poems by Jennifer Davis featuring the desert wind, Soo-oop-wa, with colour illustrations by Robyn Davis. In 1992, New Namibia Books launched the Build a Book Collective

to promote the creation of stories by young Namibian writers. Four storybooks were published, one of which, *Does Kakulu's mother use magic?* by Dawn Ridgway and illustrated by Helga Peetz deserves mention. In 1994, New Namibia Books published two books, *Legs, Bones and Eyes* by Dorian Haarhoff with quality illustrations by Helga Hoveka, and *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: traditional tales from Namibia* retold by Jennifer Davis and illustrated by Libby Costandius. Ridgway's, Haarhoff's and Davis's books all received Honourable Mentions from the Namibian Children's Book Award. Sponsorships given by donor organisations have also contributed to the publication of children's book in Namibia since independence. The Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation funded the Namibia Oral Tradition Project. Three books were published in 1996 by New Namibia Books and another one in 1997. Of these, *GiLiwe and Di Liwe and other stories* and *Muzimbikana*, skilfully illustrated by Joseph Madisia, received Honourable Mentions from the Namibian Children's Book Award. Another recipient of this recognition is the picture book *Nalohima and the Deaf Tortoise* by the storyteller Gcina Mhlope and CLaSH and illustrated by Imke Weizel. It was sponsored by Standard Bank in 1999 as a project of the Association for Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairments.

Gamsberg Macmillan

The biggest publishing house, Gamsberg Macmillan, which was founded in 1977, has added to the number of children's books in English and to books in German with English translations. Some notable Namibian Children's Book Award winners include *Monenyane*, written by Jennifer Davis and illustrated by Libby Costandius, published in 1992. It is a charming African version of the Cinderella story in which the lost slipper is substituted by a golden anklet and Monenyane departs for the feast of the chief, instead of in a pumpkin coach, on the back of a 'mighty white bull soaring into the night sky' (Davis, 1992, p. 10). *Kukurumbalumba's Magic Calabash* by Dawn Ridgway and illustrated by Helga Hoveka, is a hilarious picture book published in 1994. Colour illustrations superbly complement the text. In 1994, Ulrich Schwanecke won an award for a picture book, *Imagine You Could Fly: a children's book with rhymes and illustrations* published by Gamsberg Macmillan and the Artists' Press. In 1997 this book was translated into German under the title, *Ohne Flügel Fliegen: eine Kindergeschichte in Reimen geschrieben und illustriert*. The Namibian Children's Book Award bestowed an Honourable Mention to *Die Wahl des Schönheitskönig's der Vögel* by Joachim Voigts published by Gamsberg Macmillan in two languages in the same year. The English translation is entitled *The Birds' Beauty Contest*.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN INDIGENOUS NAMIBIAN LANGUAGES AND NAMIBIAN STORIES

The situation with books for children in the indigenous languages was, however, bleak. Despite the efforts of the Namibian Children's Book Forum, no more than

20 storybooks in the local languages have appeared in the 15-year period, 1990 to 2005. This number includes original works as well as translations from Afrikaans, English and German.

Of all the Namibian languages, Afrikaans is the language that publishers since independence are the most reluctant to publish in unless it is a prescribed school textbook. All of the Namibian Children's Book Forum distinguished children's books published since 1990 in Afrikaans were published in South Africa.

As far as the indigenous languages are concerned, the situation is even worse since the alternative of using South African published books in these languages to satisfy the reading needs of the majority of Namibian children does not exist, with the exception of Setswana. Most of the published books in indigenous Namibian languages to date are school books. The main authors of school texts for poetry, prose and drama in the indigenous languages during the nineties were Petrus Amakali and Lukas S. Amakali (Oshindonga), Betty Hango-Rummukainen (Oshikwanyama), Damian Nakare (Rukwangali), A. Iuriseb and Laurentius Davids (Khoekhoegowab), R. M. Mbala (Silozi) and Moshe Baitsewe and Johanna Morule (Setswana). Some of the titles were original works, others translations, transcriptions or collections. A few Otjiherero books were published during the eighties. Almost all of the books in indigenous languages were published by Gamsberg Macmillan. Notable is the publication of a collection of Khoekhoegowab tales by Sigrid Schmidt in ten booklets of 29 stories under the title, *Tsî i ge ge hâhe*, a Namibian Children's Book Award winner, illustrated by Sarie Maritz with amusingly horrific but skilful black and white drawings published by the Namibian Children's Book Forum and New Namibia Books (Schmidt, 1995).

Since 2000, the situation has, however, been deteriorating rapidly. Trade books for Namibian children in all the Namibian languages, i.e. books which are not set books for the schools or school readers and have been subsidised by donor funding, have diminished from 13 books per year to less than four (3.8) books per year during the 12-year period of 2000 to 2011 (Töttemeyer, 2013, pp. 17–18). Among the few trade books which have appeared since Namibia's independence however, there are two youth novels with a Namibian theme which have to be singled out for their contribution to an intercultural understanding, namely *Song of Be* and *Om 'n Kierie te Keer* or *The Price of a Chicken*.

Song of Be

Lesley Beake, an awarded South African children's book author, was the winner of the Namibian Children's Book Award in 1991 for *Song of Be*. It is the story of a beautiful San girl, Be, of the Jul'hoan people, and her struggle to cope with the transition from a stone-age culture to a modern life style. Believing that she has failed, Be tries to commit suicide by sticking a poisoned arrow into her body. While waiting to die, Be's whole life unfolds. There is social and political criticism and despair in this book, but it is also a story of love, courage and dignity.

The abduction of San children and the sexual exploitation of San women by white farmers feature, as well as the destruction of the San way of life and

culture. Having had no other choice, many Jul'hoansi joined the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) in the war against the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and then, in 1989, had to face the approaching elections for a liberated Namibia with trepidation. The story does not end with Be's death. The arrow wasn't poisoned after all, and she can muster courage to face a new future together with the young man, Khu, who had saved her from dehydration and starvation.

The Price of a Chicken

The other youth novel is Pieter Pieterse's book, published in 1997 in Afrikaans and English editions, entitled, *Om 'n Kierie te Keer: 'n jeugroman* or *The Price of a Chicken: a youth novel*. Twice awarded with the Namibian Children's Book Award, Pieter Pieterse was an eccentric hermit who lived among the Mafwe tribe for many years and became a member of that tribe. In a gripping story about the struggle to overcome poverty through entrepreneurship, and how intercultural friendships are forged through mutual respect, Pieterse manages not only to promote intercultural but also inter-lingual understanding as he skillfully weaves the Sifwe language into the Afrikaans and English texts.

The main characters are: a teenager named Tuba, a Mafwe boy from the north-east of Namibia and red-haired, nineteen-year-old Rusty Bakkes from Windhoek. Rusty, upon arrival as a white foreigner from the big city, is given a hiding with the stick by Tuba's angry grandmother. Rusty has to learn the customs of the Mafwe tribe from young Tuba. Etiquette requires that upon arrival, you bend in the direction of the other person. The older the person is, the lower you bend and clap with your cupped hands. You go and sit in the sand in front of your superior. If you hand over a present, you put it down in the sand in front of the recipient and clap your hands. Family relationships are intricately hierarchical. People have, apart from fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, also great-fathers, little fathers, great-mothers and little mothers.

If Rusty wants to do business with the people of the Mafwe tribe, he will have to get the permission of the *induna*. If you approach the *induna*'s house in a car, you may not open the door and get out, but must wait in the car until the tribal policeman fetches you. You bend and clap in the direction of the *induna* and if you are young, you fall on your knees and move forward in the sand. You also clap many times during the conversation to show your humility. Upon leaving, everybody claps and the visitors take their leave by walking backwards towards the entrance.

Haiseb and the man who cooked himself and other folktales from the Khoi of Namibia

In 2008 the 29 Khoekhoegowab tales by Sigrid Schmidt that were published in 1995 were translated into English and published by the Namibian Children's Book Forum and Macmillan Education Namibia in one collection entitled, *Haiseb and*

the man who cooked himself and other folktales from the Khoi of Namibia (Schmidt, 2008). The same delightful illustrations from 1995 by Sarie Maritz were used. The literary character, Haiseb is well-known among the Khoi; in this collection, Haiseb features in six of the stories. In several stories he is a thief, a trickster, a liar and a useless, indolent husband who roams about and sneaks into people's houses and consumes their food. He has two wives, a Stupid Wife and a Clever Wife. The former is gullible and uncritical and is ever so often protected by the Clever Wife who is wary and suspicious of Haiseb's every move and saves not only herself and the Stupid Wife from the consequences of their irresponsible husband's behaviour but she also gets Haiseb out of his predicament.¹⁰⁴

Another publication that promotes inter-lingual understanding is *The Magic Tree and Other Tales from the San* (Töttemeyer, 2007), a collection of stories workshopped with San speakers that has been published in English and Jul'hoansi.

Young Voices

With reference to presenting the range of Namibian languages, *Young Voices*, a project funded by the Embassy of Finland, had the objective to stimulate a reading and writing culture among Namibian youth, by promoting an awareness of the various cultures, and providing a rare opportunity to read in all Namibian languages. A story-writing competition for learners in secondary schools was organised in 2000 by the Library Service of the Ministry of Education. *Young Voices*, a collection of the winning stories and some additional stories of merit, was published in 2001. The book consists of twelve stories in English and eighteen stories in nine of the local languages (Young Voices, 2001).

Thematically, an interesting kaleidoscope of Namibian life emerges from the pages. Traditional stories which constitute half of the volume feature the greedy husband and father who tries to trick his wife to satisfy his monstrous appetite. Contemporary stories present social problems, such as, alcohol abuse, the destruction of young lives by the killer disease HIV/AIDS and the influence of witchcraft on modern African society. The overall winner of the competition was an English story on the land issue, a topic of great relevance in Namibia today. It is a powerful, shocking and vivid narrative of the terrible price which has to be paid when the characters resort to violence in an effort to solve the land issue.

Under the Story Tree

In contrast to books on contemporary social challenges and historical trauma, children and young people need positive life-affirming themes in their literature in order to make them enjoy reading and to help them grow in understanding of themselves, others and the world. Their books should be imaginative, humorous, moving and encouraging. A project which aimed at achieving these literary qualities, is entitled *Under the Story Tree* (Töttemeyer, 2005) and offers modern stories specifically for young children. It was the biggest multilingual project for children in the history of Namibia. The

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of this theme in Oshiwambo literature, see chapter 7.

book consists of 16 stories, illustrated in colour in the following thirteen languages: English, Afrikaans, German, French, Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama, Khoekhoegowab, Rukwangali, Otjiherero, Silozi, Setswana, Rumanyo and Thimbukushu. All the books in the different languages are translations of stories in original English, collected by this author and published between 2005 and 2011.

Under the Story Tree is a co-production between the Namibian Children's Book Forum and the publisher, Macmillan Education Namibia Publishers (formerly Gamsberg Macmillan, and now Namibia Publishing House).

In these stories Namibians of all ethnic groups are presented as one co-operative group in a country which has been peaceful, for twenty-seven years. There is no mention of 'us' and 'them,' no comparisons, no efforts to present differences in ethnicity, class or dress. Every story has its plot, its conflict, its challenge or problem, but it is mainly a portrayal of a normal childhood, of a peaceful environment, friendship, team work, love and caring, family life, every day play, laughter and humour, an acceptance of the others, the outsider and the physically challenged. In the illustrations, the Africans are wearing modern clothing, they are attractive looking adults who have good jobs. Life is simply normal and this is celebrated.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

In 2012 the Namibian Children's Book Forum could again present awards to Namibian authors and illustrators. Marga Jonker and Alzette Prins won an award for the charming picture book, *Wat is jy, Kartoffel?* published by LAPA, Pretoria and Marie Reyneke for *Spore in die Arep* published by Human & Rousseau, Cape Town. Macmillan Education Namibia was awarded for the Afrila Multilingual Picture Book Project for very young readers in 11 languages funded by GTZ (the German Organisation for Technical Cooperation). For school readers in the various languages, the following authors received an honourable mention: Petrus Mbenzi and Rauna Ndinoshiho, Abed Shiimi YaShiimi, Freddy Nafuka and Annatjie Louw for *Oulapstories* while Linus Diener Ndjyharine was commended for the illustrations in the English and Jul'hoansi books, *The magic tree/Nlom !aihn*, published by Out of Africa. Awards were also bestowed on Fritz Eloff for *Giants of the desert* published by Pollination, Noreen Arangies for *The most important book* published by Wordweaver, Erna Müller for *When you dance with the crocodile* published by Wordweaver and Lucia Engombe for *Kind Nr 95: meine Deutsch-Afrikanische Odyssee* published by Ullstein Verlag.

Since 2011 there has been more momentum towards the provision of books for children, both in the private and public sectors. This came about particularly because of the commitment of two individuals, Bryony van der Merwe and Helvi Itenge-Wheeler.

Wordweaver Publishing House

Wordweaver Publishing House under the direction of Bryony van der Merwe had a commitment to promoting children's literature. In 2012, Wordweaver published *Sumbu: a story about freedom and togetherness*, written and illustrated by Romeo Sinkala. It is a story about a family returning from exile to Namibia and settling in a rural village. Hopefully this book will in time be translated into indigenous languages. Then in 2013 Wordweaver brought out the picture book *Elves and feathered friends* by Isabel Eckleben (translated into German in 2014). It is not a story in the ordinary sense but consists of different chapters depicting interactions between various whimsical elves with Namibian birds and wild animals. Other books by Wordweaver include a non-fiction book for children titled, *My book of Namibian land mammals* by Olga Kausch, *The Big Adventure*, a picture book written by Tehrah Lee and illustrated by Ida, as well as *The Little Weaver Bird* by Alison Gardiner and Deon Louw published in 2015. Also in 2015, Wordweaver launched *Jahora and first day* by Mari Serebrov and illustrated by Romeo Sinkala, a children's book in three languages, English, Otjiherero and German. It is a story of the Ovaherero culture prior to the genocide of 1904–1905. The book was funded by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Yambeka Children Media

Yambeka Children Media was founded in Columbus, Ohio (USA) by Helvi Itenge-Wheeler, a Namibian who moved to the United States in 2001 to complete her higher education. Yambeka is a term which literally means 'Blessed' in the Oshiwambo language. This community social enterprise was created to promote African literature, languages, and short stories for children.

While in America, Itenge-Wheeler found it challenging to educate her children in her native language because she could not find children's books written in Oshiwambo. Determined to teach her children Oshiwambo, she began to create her own babies' and toddlers' books using tools available from her own resources. To date she has published more than nine books based on Namibian and other African traditional tales. Four Yambeka Children Media books received Honourable Mentions at the Namibian Children's Book Forum Awards in 2012, namely *Mrs Kangaroo visits Namibia* by Ambrosius N. Amutenja and *Kishikishi the Bad Monster*, *The Jackal and the Hyena* and *Nehoya and the Crocodile* written by the publisher. *Iinamwenyo Animals* an Oshiwambo book for children and *Sam Nujoma, the Founding President of Namibia*, were also written by Itenge-Wheeler. Other Yambeka Children Media books include *The Dancing Tortoise and the San Hunters of the Kalahari* by †Oma Frans edited and arranged by Sonia Juvik and Helvi Itenge-Wheeler and *Ongololo Tai Teleke* by Taimi Nghikembua. Itenge-Wheeler is also the founder of the Namibia Book Fair which set a goal, at its second fair in 2015, to form a platform for writers, publishers and readers to create an interest around creative writing and the culture of reading.

There have also recently been other initiatives, particularly in Afrikaans texts for children. Sigrid Schmidt's collection of old Afrikaans stories, *Die vere van die duiwel: vergete ou Afrikaanse sprokies opgediep in Namibië* was published by Kuiseb Publisher in 2014 and received an award from the ATKV or Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (Afrikaans Language and Literature Association).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion and on a positive note, the latest developments in the domain of book publishing for children are encouraging but the publishing of more trade books for children in all Namibian languages still needs to happen. Namibian children need stories which promote human and intercultural understanding in an integrated, harmonious, non-racial society. Hopefully, the stories discussed in this chapter will boost the development of a reading culture among Namibian children, and a cadre of future authors, particularly in the indigenous languages. Authors of children's books in the indigenous languages are sorely needed to take local language publishing forward because, as stated by Carpenter, 'To neglect a language, is to sabotage a culture' (as quoted by Calvert, 1992, p. 24).

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When the colonised imperialists go post-colonial: Namibian-German literature since independence

Sylvia Schlettwein

INTRODUCTION

Whether as missionaries, as imperialists and colonial settlers, as British and South African subjects, as citizens of an independent Namibia, or as members of the German 'tribe' of Namibia, the German speakers of Namibia have always produced literary texts. The German writers in colonial South West Africa quickly acquired a taste for anecdotal story-telling which is reminiscent of story-telling around the campfire. A new post-independence generation of German-Namibian writers, who are tapping into this tradition of *Südwester* storytelling, but are venturing into deconstructing, ironically breaking and reinventing it, is slowly emerging.

Namibian-German literature is produced by a minority population of native German speakers who find themselves in the unique position of expressing themselves in a language which is viewed as colonial, foreign and indigenous, all at the same time.

In light of its uniqueness and the interest it has for post-colonial literary discourse, a definition, overview and review of contemporary German-Namibian literature is long overdue.

It is surprising how many scholars seem to know that something like a contemporary German literature in post-independence Namibia does exist. If one, however, considers contemporary Namibian literature at large, one has to admit that the corpus is not very large. Considering the relatively small number of literary

texts coming from Namibia, the German component is probably disproportionately large, i.e. within the Namibian context, the literary production in German language is significant, at least in quantitative terms. Yet there has been very little research or commentary available on this literature. This chapter aims to make a start in changing this situation. The purpose is thus to provide an overview of the production and evolution of fictional texts in German by Namibian authors since independence and to establish the place which Namibian-German literature has in Namibian literature and whether and how it qualifies as a post-colonial literature.

I define Namibian-German authors as authors who produce texts in German, have spent the larger part of their lives in Namibia and they mostly relate to Namibia in their writing. The idea is that a Namibian-German writer writes from within Namibia, from a Namibian perspective and not from the perspective of a visitor to or a researcher of Namibia from abroad.

GERMAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN NAMIBIA

The unique case of German as a language and German language writing in Namibia becomes clear, if one compares it with the status of other European colonial languages and their post-colonial literatures in their former colonies elsewhere in the world and in particular, in Africa. British settlers in North America, Australia and New Zealand have broken free from their motherland, to forge their own national identities, but have kept English as their mother language. German settlers in South West Africa had no intention or perhaps had no opportunity to break free from the motherland to create their own politically independent nation. We therefore do not have a case of an independent German speaking nation on African soil. But neither did the German colonisers and their language follow the route of the English, French, Portuguese and Belgian colonisers in Africa, who 'succeeded' in making English, French and Portuguese, or at least variations thereof, the official languages and in most cases, also the lingua franca in the colonised territories, even after these colonies had become independent African nations. Subsequently, the literatures in these countries are to a large extent in English, French and Portuguese (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002, pp. 1–13).

Germany could not impose itself in this manner in South West Africa and later Namibia, partly because the complex structures of the German language do not lend themselves to become a lingua franca for a linguistically diverse population, and partly because German colonial rule (1885–1915) was fairly short-lived. When Germany lost its colonies after World War I, the German settlers were in a way themselves colonised, becoming first British and later South African subjects. German was certainly a privileged 'white' or European language under the British, South African and the apartheid regime, but its speakers and writers were essentially located within the minority South West African German community, comprising descendants of German colonial settlers as well as the later immigrants of German descent. While this community has been, and is viewed as the former coloniser it has been and

is simultaneously perceived as a Namibian 'tribe', whose language happens to be German. With Namibia's independence in 1990, German in Namibia slipped into a very peculiar triple status. It was at the same time, a minority indigenous language, a former colonial language and a foreign language.

The result is a somewhat schizophrenic approach to literary expression. Whilst the literary expression in German was, and for some citizens, still is, one of many tools to affirm a perceived cultural superiority and/or differentiation, it also plays a great part in what I would like to call the 'indigenisation' of German in Namibia. Producing literary texts in German was and is a way of asserting a cultural and linguistic identity in a multicultural and multilingual society, but it is also a way of making German local, indigenous, and maybe even 'ethnic'.

Post-colonial German literature in Namibia has thus not taken the route of English, French, Spanish and Portuguese post-colonial literatures where the majority of the formerly colonised population appropriated and abrogated the language of the coloniser to create their own literatures and literary discourses in local varieties of the former language of oppression (Ashcroft et al., 2002, pp. 37–43). Post-colonial German literature in Namibia is produced by a minority population of German native speakers.

Namibian-German literature is literature by the former colonisers, which has morphed into a minority indigenous language literature, but which is theoretically accessible to a considerably wider international audience than any other indigenous Namibian language because of its speakers and readers outside Namibia, in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. To make things even more complex, there is the case of Namibian writers who have come from the group of the so-called GDR Kids.¹⁰⁵ These are Namibians who were exiled as children and young adults in the former German Democratic Republic, who have chosen to write in German rather than in English or their original mother tongue (mostly Oshiwambo). The decision of German-Namibian writers to write in German is thus not the same as the decision for other African writers who choose to write in English, French or Portuguese. It is akin to the decision of African writers to write in their vernacular, the significant difference being that the vernacular is also a European foreign language (cf. Schlettwein, 2014).

The special characteristics of the German spoken in Namibia have been discussed at length and in depth elsewhere and it is not my task to evaluate the linguistic status of the so-called *Namslang* or *Namdeutsch* formerly known as *Südwesterdeutsch*. Some say that it is a dialect, while others say it is slang or jargon. For our purpose, it suffices to know that the 'indigenous' native German speakers in Namibia have created their own brand of German, which manifests itself at structural, pronunciation and metaphorical levels, as well as the borrowing of vocabulary, from Afrikaans, English, Oshiwambo, Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero. While *Namdeutsch* has found its way into the Namibian popular culture and is clearly a linguistic expression of the desire to differentiate the Namibian-German culture from the European German culture, i.e. an expression of a Namibian-German national and cultural identity, it is

¹⁰⁵ For a more detailed discussion on GDR Kids, see Chapter 5.

not homogenously accepted and used within the Namibian-German community. It would be faulty to assume that the level of identification with *Namdeutsch* is directly proportional to the level of identification with the Namibian national identity. While *Namdeutsch* is used in Namibian-German literature as a means of authenticity and local flavour, there are no full-length texts of literary fiction in *Namdeutsch*.

The most extensive classification and analysis of the colonial and post-colonial South West African/Namibian German literature up to the year 2000, can be found in Thomas Keil's (2003, pp. 145–337) doctoral thesis *Die Postkoloniale deutsche Literatur in Namibia (1920–2000)*. This has unfortunately found very little recognition in Namibian literary research. Keil divides German South West African/Namibian literature into *Missionsliteratur* (missionary literature), *Berichte der Forschungsreisenden* (explorers' reports), *Südwestafrikanische Literatur der Kolonialzeit* (South West African literature during the period of colonisation), *Die sogenannte Südwester Literatur der Zwischenkriegszeit* (the so called *Südwester* literature between the two World Wars) and the *Deutsch-namibische Literatur als deutschsprachige Auslandsliteratur* (German-Namibian literature as a German language literature outside Germany). There have, however, been further developments in Namibian-German literature since Keil's findings and it is these most recent texts falling into the category of 'Namibian-German literature as a German language literature outside Germany', with which this chapter is concerned.

SÜDWESTER STORYTELLING: DID INDEPENDENCE REALLY HAPPEN?

Similarly to the early post-colonial English writing in Australia, New Zealand and North America and French writing in America and Canada, the early German texts from South West Africa are narrations of the European self in a new and sometimes hostile environment, of encounters with the indigenous 'others' and of the quest to bring 'civilisation and culture' to this new environment and its people. The German writers in South West Africa, however, quickly acquired a taste for the anecdotal story-telling which mimics storytelling around the campfire. This folkloristic narration continues to be popular with Namibian German writers and readers, as are (auto-) biographical accounts of life and adventurous travel in Namibia.

A fairly recent example is Konrad Zander's *Ein Südwester Farmer, Jäger und Maler* (1999), an autobiographical account which is strewn with anecdotes and adventurous tales from farm life, hunting and travels in *Südwest*, the previous South West Africa. Zander's narrative technique is typically one of announcing a life event or a personality at the beginning of a chapter, then proceeding to elaborate on the background of the event or personality subsequently using an anecdote or a string of anecdotes for illustration. These are complemented by photographs and his own illustrations, as Zander is also a well-known painter of animals in the Namibian landscape. He laconically refers to his artistic endeavours as *Meine Malerei* (Zander, 1999, p. 151) and explains how the label 'The bush artist' (Zander, 1999, p. 149), which he got from a South African critic, is quite fitting: While

Zander appreciates that art is a way ‘*in die große Welt hineinzuriechen*’ (Zander, 1999, p. 151), to get a whiff of the ‘big world’, he remains faithful to the *Busch* (Zander, 1999, p. 151).

After consultation with his mentor, Professor Behn, Zander decides not to take up the very good offers of some Windhoek businessmen to finance his studies at an art academy in Germany. He remains a farmer and proudly quotes painter Fritz Krampe: ‘What do you say, Professor, we have to study at an academy for years and this guy here in the bush has the cheek to just do it!’¹⁰⁶ (Zander, 1999, p. 152). Zander portrays himself as a ‘natural’ artist, one who portrays nature and whose talent comes to him naturally. He creates the artistic identity of the *Südwestler Maler*, who paints with a European technique and who seeks the recognition of European audiences, but who paints on *Südwest* soil and whose art is inspired by wildlife and landscape. This is exemplified in the account of a six-month trip to Europe by Zander and his wife: They stock up on ‘art’ by visiting galleries and exhibitions and Zander takes art classes (cf. Zander, 1999, p. 153). But his own exhibition in Göttingen/Germany features his ‘*Mitgebrachten Arbeiten*’ (Zander, 1999, p. 153), work he has brought with him from the ‘bush’, not the work which he has produced in Europe.

Published after Namibia’s independence, *Ein südwestler Farmer, Jäger und Maler* covers the time span from 1908 till 1992, i.e. it is mostly situated in the pre-independence era and the title alludes to *Südwest*, not Namibia. The actual narration of Zander’s life goes into the seventies. Interestingly, we read nothing about the time between then and the year 1992, to which Zander jumps to end off his narration by telling the reader that this is the year in which his *Zieh-Vater* (Zander, 1999, p. 156), his foster father, Wilhelm Doiseb aka Kasuppi, dies.

While generally devoid of overtly racist undertones and portraying human relations and conditions in a matter of fact way, rather than explicitly commenting on the socio-political backdrop, Zander’s omission of the years leading up to the independence of Namibia is striking.

What prevails is the idea of a pre-independence *Südwest*, home territory with which the writer identifies through birth and childhood, land ownership and cultivation, people, landscape, wildlife, life and work, and last but not least, art.

Though it might not have been Zander’s conscious intention as a writer, the unpretentious addition of his very personal relationship with Kasuppi and his son Agarob and the farmhand Benjamin to his narrative, marks a transition of the perspective of the settler encountering the native ‘other’ toward a more hybrid perspective. Different worlds not only meet but overlap in the sense of Homi Bhaba’s and Edward Said’s idea of post-colonialism (cf. Lützeler, 2009, p. 26). This brand of post-colonial hybridity is special though. It does not come from the formerly or presently colonised, nor is it a reflection on the relationship between worlds by a citizen of the former coloniser’s country. It comes from what is left of the former colonial settler community, which has strings attached to the old colonial

¹⁰⁶ *Nicht wahr, Herr Professor, da müssen wir Jahre auf eine Akademie gehen, und dieser Kerl hier im Busch wagt es einfach, so etwas mit einer Frechheit hinzuhauen!*

‘motherland’, but is already firmly rooted in the new African ‘motherland’. As much as Zander (unwittingly) demonstrates how the civilisations of the colonisers and the colonised mutually influence each other (Lützeler, 2009, p. 27) and in fact create hybrid minorities, he is unable to overcome the paternalistic attitude completely and a sense of superiority of a minority endowed with privileges and power, which results in a somewhat ambiguous perception of the relationship between the *Südwester Farmer* and *die Schwarzen* (the blacks):

It was a very serious concern to us to not only work to the best of our abilities for the livestock and ourselves, but to also let the blacks partake in our progress. Besides this family planning and systematic birth control was of utmost importance to us. We did our best to patiently enlighten our employees, hold weekly church services, introduce compulsory schooling and encourage a sense of responsibility and self-guided action. (Zander, 1999, p. 154)¹⁰⁷

TIME WARP AND FIRST STEPS TOWARD MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES: *ZWISCHEN TAG UND TRAUM*

In 1993, the *Deutscher Kulturrat* in Namibia organised a short story competition and published the 23 best submissions in the anthology *Zwischen Tag und Traum*. The majority of these stories still contain pure anecdotal material, often telling of encounters with animals on the farm or describing the hardships of farm life. Black Namibians feature in their ‘traditional’ roles of farmhands and trackers and are frequently quoted to demonstrate their particular ‘indigenous’ use of German and/or Afrikaans, including the terms ‘Mister’ and ‘Missies’ commonly used to address the German or Afrikaans speaking farmer and his wife. If one reads these stories today – with the knowledge that they were published after independence – one cannot help the feeling of being in a time warp. This may be because some of these stories were in fact written before independence and it may represent the fact that in many remote areas of Namibia, including farms, social and hierarchical structures from the apartheid era had prevailed long after the downfall of the political regime. Many of the stories in this anthology are an unbroken and unquestioned continuation of *Südwester* storytelling with very little or no fictionalisation and/or narrative distance. There are, however, some stories in this anthology which mark a first departure from *Südwester* storytelling, from the pattern and perspective of a farmer/hunter or the farmer’s wife writing down an amusing or startling experience or event in their lives.

¹⁰⁷ *Es war uns ein sehr ernstes Anliegen, nicht nur für das Vieh und uns selber nach besten Kräften zu wirtschaften, sondern auch die Schwarzen an einem Fortschritt teilhaben zu lassen. Überdies legten wir großen Wert auf Familienplanung und gezielte Geburtenkontrolle. Wir bemühten uns, geduldig die Angestellten aufzuklären, wöchentliche Gottesdienste abzuhalten, Schulpflicht einzuführen und möglichst das Verantwortungsgefühl und selbstständiges Handeln zu fördern.*

Irmela Erlank Rethemeyer explores the impact of post-independence paradigm shifts on family and love relationships in the very personal (yet fictional) stream-of-consciousness narration, *Zwischen Tag und Traum* (Deutscher Kulturrat, 1993, pp. 7–10). Brigitte Weidlich gives a mosaic of perspectives on the Border War in a well-constructed multi-layered epistolary/diary story *Das Tagebuch* (Deutscher Kulturrat, 1993, pp. 17–20), where the reader accesses four life stories touched by the Border War namely, that of a young white, German speaking South West African soldier, of his mother, of an East-German field doctor stationed in a SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) base in Angola and of a young PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) fighter.

Nambata Shapaka and Hans Volker Gretschel both introduce the, at the time, new perspective of the children and teenage returnees from the former East Germany; Shapaka's account is autobiographical, whilst Gretschel's is fiction based on real persons and events. Helmut Sydow illustrates the controversial position of the white male in post-independence Namibia as a victim of his time in *Entlassung in die Unabhängigkeit* (Deutscher Kulturrat, 1993, pp. 25–28). In her story, *Wie die Gobabis Prawns in die Annalen der kulinarischen Geschichte Namibias eingingen* (*Zwischen Tag und Traum*, 1993, pp. 87–90) Ingrid Kubisch satirically twists the deprivations of farm life by showing that beetles are not only eaten in times of hardship but also in times which permit the luxury of braai competitions.

THE *DOPPELPUNKT* ANTHOLOGIES: NAMIBIAN-GERMAN WRITERS FINDING THEIR FEET

Two other collections of Namibian-German short stories, *Africamerone* (Doppelpunkt, 2001) and *Masken Zauber Mythen* (Doppelpunkt, 2005), were produced during the first decade after independence by *doppelpunkt*, a club of Namibian-German writers operating on a By Invitation principle. The criteria regarding who merits an invitation for the inclusion and participation in the activities and projects of *doppelpunkt*, are not fixed in a constitution or known to the public, which does contribute to the 'secret society' aura of the group.

The appropriateness of the intertextual reference to Bocaccio's *Il Decamerone* (Bocaccio 2014) in the title of *Africamerone*, is debatable. *Il Decamerone* is set against the outbreak of the Black Death in Italy, where seven young men and women, who have isolated themselves in a villa, tell each other stories over a period of ten days. These stories are embedded in a frame, which unifies 'a mixed bag of tales into a unitary work of art' (Wallace, 1991, p. 3). While there are seven authors in *Africamerone*, the attempt to create a frame by describing how the seven authors seek refuge in a cave from a sand storm in the desert and tell one another stories, seems contrived, especially because the stories do not form a unitary work. Furthermore, it seems a bit far-fetched to liken the authors' sitting in the cave for a couple of hours waiting for a sandy breeze to subside, to the idea of isolating yourself for an extended period from a danger such as the plague.

The different stories indeed constitute a mixed bag in terms of genre (crime, erotica, speculative fiction, romance, and classical short story format) and topics (socio-political issues, love, human relationships, bigotry, hypocrisy, infidelity, birth, crime). An analysis of each of the stories would take many pages and picking one would not do justice to the overall well-polished finish of this collection. Its strength lies in its variety, which forms an eclectic mosaic of Namibian-German writing, *Südwester* storytelling and modern, sometimes even post-modern fiction cohabiting peacefully between the covers.

What is of particular interest for literary discourse, is the literary programme for post-independence Namibian-German writing which is implied in the title, foreword and execution of *Africamerone*, africanised story-telling rather than story-writing (Wallace, 1991, p. 2) from different perspectives in the German 'vernacular': *Il Decamerone* was written in Italian, not Latin as was customary for literature and scholarly texts at the time (Wallace, 1991, p. 2). The authors of *Africamerone* chose to write in their German vernacular, not in the official language of Namibia, English.

One would expect the later *doppelpunkt* anthology, *Masken Zauber Mythen* (Doppelpunkt, 2005) to advance the evolution of Namibian-German literature further. With a few exceptions, this collection seems unpolished and unsophisticated compared to *Africamerone*, especially in terms of literary technique and execution. In most of the stories, it seems as though the intentions and ideas are good, but the execution is either lame or downright unskilled. While it is not my place to speculate on the reasons for the apparent lack of craftsmanship in *Masken Zauber Mythen*, it is perhaps necessary to reflect on whether it is also the choice of theme which has contributed to its failure. The theme of masks, magic and myths has become such a clichéd point of reference for encounters between the indigenous African or native and the European conqueror/explorer/traveller/volunteer that it is bound to stay stuck in cliché if not broken or overcome through a fresh choice of genre or perspective(s). Perhaps the tackling of such an over-loaded theme was an over-ambitious project for writers who were still finding their post-colonial feet.

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AND COMPLEXITY FROM WITHIN: HELMUT SYDOW

One of the *doppelpunkt* writers, Helmut Sydow, is the only Namibian-German writer, besides Giseler Hofmann, to have written and published a full-length novel. *Treibholz* (Sydow, 2009) tells the story of the friendship and trials and tribulations of two diamond smugglers, the German Egon Feierabend and the Herero-German Otto Müller in the 1920s in South West Africa. Sydow's novel is a sad example of how Namibian-German literature is at times unjustly discredited by the very community it comes from and is intended for, not through literary criticism and discourse but through a lack of it. The novel has received a lot of its publicity in Namibia through hearsay on its 'kinky' content, which was construed as the portrayal of the author's own sex life. It received additional negative publicity

through a, at times, ridiculous and absurd exchange of letters to the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, the German daily newspaper in Namibia, in which a reader accused Sydow of slander based on the similarities of names used in *Treibholz* with those of real farms and persons. (*Leserbriefe* in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of 21, 27, 28 January and 4 February 2005). Sydow unfortunately decided to answer this criticism in detail as opposed to simply referring to the difference between author and narrator, the creative freedom of the writer and the use of a watertight disclaimer. There was, therefore, very little public discussion or review of the book based on its content and literary quality.

Apart from being a well-researched piece of historical fiction, Sydow overcomes the clichés of *Südwester* storytelling by developing a fresh set of metaphors of symbolism, which are still recognisable as typically Namibian, but which avoid stereotypes, such as in the following passage where thoughts are likened to *bokkies*, to goats:

Thoughts are like goats. When you want to count them, they become patches of colour that merge into each other. They hop, push, bleat and stomp up dust. They jump over the fence, crawl under the fence, run between your legs or walk backwards, looking as though they stand still while they do so. And when you look again, they are gone and you can start all over again. And sometimes they run around you and then you lie on your back with kraal dung in your eyes and kraal dung in your nose and ask yourself: 'How could this happen?' Such are *bokkies* and such are thoughts. (Sydow, 2009, p. 103)¹⁰⁸

Sydow latches onto the animal imagery of *Südwester* Storytelling, but instead of merely describing the antics of goats, he uses the *bokkie* and its behaviour, to reflect on the nature of thoughts and thinking.

The same principle of giving the *Südwester* stereotypes and clichés a fresh twist applies to characters and setting in *Treibholz*. While it is once again a farm, Uras, which is the primary setting, the action extends to various corners and towns in the southern and coastal regions, including the Sperrgebiet. These changes of place at times give the novel a road-movie feel.

Sydow's characters break the cliché of the farmer/hunter-wife-farmworkers-livestock constellation. There is a farmer, Niko Hohenbruch, but he is not one of the main characters; he dies within the first third of the novel and is not the able-bodied rural type at all. He is a World War I veteran whose injuries left him in pain for the remainder of his life. His wife Broni is also not the usual nurturing stereotype of the farmer's wife, whose principal goal in life is to create a warm home for her

¹⁰⁸ *Gedanken sind wie Ziegen. Wenn du sie zählen willst, werden sie zu Farbflecken, die sich ineinanderschieben. Sie hopsen, schubsen, meckern und machen Staub. Sie springen über den Draht, kriechen unter dem Draht hindurch, rennen dir zwischen die Beine oder gehen rückwärts und sehen dabei aus, als stünden sie still. Und wenn du wieder hinsiehst, dann sind sie weg und du kannst von vorne anfangen. Und manchmal rennen sie um dich und dann liegst du auf dem Rücken, hast Kraalmist in den Augen und Kraalmist in der Nase und fragst dich: Wie konnte das passieren? So sind Bokkies und so sind Gedanken.*

husband and children despite all hardships and odds. She can ride, shoot and fly a plane and has sex appeal as well as a strong will and her own opinions. Broni is a nurse by training, who met the two men, Hohenbruch and Feierabend, with whom she constitutes a love triangle, which was developed whilst they were patients in a military field hospital during the First World War. Egon Feierabend is officially employed as farm administrator on Uras, and was brought there by none other than Broni. It is not the woman, who follows her man to his African farm and makes a home for him and their children there, tending to the household and children as well as raising chickens and orphaned animals. It is the wife of an unfit farmer who brings her lover to the African farm to make life more bearable:

Winter is coming, she thought and started to fear the slaughtering of the little lambs, as she knew she was going to cry through the nights again. She then thought of her husband, who was unsuitable for farm life and she wondered whether the caretaker would ever return. ... And she remembered how she had brought this man to South-West because Uras needed a caretaker and those were times of need in Germany and the man knew a lot about animals. Of this man she thought ... and of her own husband and she was worried. Then she got up and walked into the house with the dog following her. (Sydow, 2009, p. 36)¹⁰⁹

Sydow does not, however, proceed to transport the stereotype of the heartless whore into an African farm setting. Broni is a nurse (which could be used to latch on to another female stereotype) and allusions to her soft heart are many, e.g. she cries at the thought of the many little Karakul lambs which have to be slaughtered and worries about the two men in her life as illustrated in the passage above. On the other hand, she is the one who passes judgement on her husband's unsuitability for farm life and seems to be the one 'wearing the trousers' in her marriage.¹¹⁰ She is a strong woman rather than a domineering one and definitely seems more compatible with Feierabend than with her husband. It comes as no surprise that she eventually marries Feierabend after her husband's death. Her own death is symbolic of her complex personality, strong and free-willed yet nurturing and willing to risk it all for the man she loves; she crashes the plane which she hijacks from the diamond police, who are holding Feierabend for diamond smuggling.

Feierabend himself is portrayed as someone who could be described as an intellectual *Südwest*er rogue with some qualities fit for a man of action or a superhero.

¹⁰⁹ *Der Winter kommt, dachte sie und begann sich erneut vor dem Schlachten der kleinen Lämmer zu fürchten, denn sie wusste, dass sie wieder die Nächte durch heulen würde. Dann dachte sie an ihren Mann, der sich für die Farm nicht eignete, und sie fragte sich, ob der Verwalter jemals zurückkommen würde. ... Und sie erinnerte sich, wie sie diesen Mann nach Südwest geholt hatte, weil Uras einen Verwalter brauchte und in Deutschland Not herrschte und der Mann etwas von Tieren verstand. An diesen Mann ... und an ihren eigenen Mann dachte sie und machte sich Sorgen. Dann stand sie auf, ging ins Haus und der Hund folgte ihr.*

¹¹⁰ Sydow does take great care to describe Broni's elegant dress style, which is not that of a gun-slinging woman. Always appropriate to the situation, it includes trousers as well as dresses and skirts.

He has managed to fool the British diamond police in South West Africa for years and always has a witty comment to hand. He likes a stiff drink, can physically reach places nobody else can, has powers of sexual attraction over the female sex and knows the geography of the country like the back of his hand. He is also an excellent though reluctant shot and hunter. At the same time he is able to reflect on various philosophical and socio-political issues in letters, speeches and conversations and also has the courage to voice his critical views and has an attitude of 'live and let live', as he does in a speech before the *Deutscher Bund*:

Most of you have been in the country for years, you are well established, many of you live with black women on farms, have children with these women and nobody gives a damn. Others work side by side with blacks and South Africans on the fields at the coast and everybody gets along – according to the motto: live and let live. I ask you: Do you want this equilibrium to be destroyed in the name of an ideology of hate ...? (Sydow, 2009, p. 239)¹¹¹

Enter Feierabend's side-kick and one of the most controversial characters in the Namibian-German literature to date: Otto Müller. Müller is of mixed race, the son of a German *Schutztruppler* and an Ovaherero woman, who says at the beginning of the book: 'Home? ... For me Germany has always been home ... but now after the death of my father ... and anyway: as Sarotti moor. ...' (Sydow, 2009, p. 17).¹¹² In the course of the novel, Müller's initial self-ironical approach to his hybrid identity slowly but surely morphs into a bitter and disillusioned view of a broken identity. This is exemplified through Müller's relationships with his German entourage. His relationship with Véronique, the wife of the villain, Zybrinski, gets off to a passionate start, but slowly but surely deteriorates into non-communication and silent rejection. Véronique is not willing to relinquish her privileges as a white married woman and returns to Europe, pregnant with Müller's child. Towards the end of the novel Müller's own bitterness as well as the socio-political developments in the country, bring him to the point where he can no longer view Feierabend as a friend, but stereotypes him as a 'white man':

The white man's impatience! Typical! Can't wait. Everything must happen immediately. He has to investigate everything. He has to impose his will on all things. But he has no business to be in Africa – with his albino hide. I tell you: Leave things as they are. Don't always

¹¹¹ *Die meisten von Ihnen sind seit Jahren hier im Land, sind alteingesessen, viele von Ihnen leben mit schwarzen Frauen auf Farmen, haben Kinder mit diesen Frauen und niemand regt sich darüber auf. Andere arbeiten Seite an Seite mit Schwarzen und Südafrikanern auf den Feldern an der Küste und man kommt miteinander aus - nach dem Motto: Man lebt und lässt leben. Da frage ich Sie: Wollen Sie, dass dieses Gleichgewicht im Namen einer Haß-Ideologie gestört wird...?*

¹¹² *Heimat?... Für mich war Deutschland immer die Heimat... aber jetzt nach dem Tod meines Vaters... und überhaupt: So als Sarotti Mohr. ...*

interfere. What will come, will come. When will you finally get that?
(Sydow, 2009, p. 218)¹¹³

Similar to his portrayal of sex as a driving motivational force behind man's actions, Sydow's efforts to reflect on the issues of racism, identity and historical guilt through literary fiction, are at times successfully integrated into his writing and at other times seem contrived and unmotivated. This also goes for *Treibholz* as well as his numerous short stories, published in *Felsgraffiti*, the only German language literary journal in Namibia, the two Doppelpunkt anthologies and his own anthology, *Umbruchzeiten* (Sydow, 2010). Regardless of whether the individual reader likes or dislikes Sydow's focalisation on these issues, he has to be credited with introducing multiple points of view and the complexity of perception into the Namibian-German literature, if not Namibian literature at large.

Paul Michael Lützeler in his standard work on the German post-colonial literature, *Postmoderne und postkoloniale deutschsprachige Literatur* (2009), does not mention the Namibian-German literature once. He analyses the works of authors from the German speaking countries whose writing reflects on the situation in the former colonised parts of the world, i.e. the so-called *Dritten Welt* (Lützeler 2009, p. 104). His observation that narration techniques have changed from an olympic-omniscient (*olympisch-allwissendes*) point of view to a multiplicity of perspectives (Lützeler, 2009, p. 105) is certainly applicable to Sydow. Sydow's contribution to German language post-colonial literature, however, comes from within a former German colony, not from a German author who has travelled in the former colonies.

NO LAUGHING MATTER? INGRID KUBISCH

Another prolific member of the *doppelpunkt* group was Ingrid Kubisch. Apart from Sydow, she is the only author from this group who has published outside the *doppelpunkt* anthologies and *Felsgraffiti*. While the label 'kinky' has stuck with Sydow, Kubisch is labelled as an author of 'funny' stories. Humour is definitely a key element in most of Kubisch's stories and the romance stories from her first anthology, *Vom Bohrloch bis zum Riempiestuhl*, make for light, entertaining reading. The collection is aptly subtitled *heitere Geschichten*, amusing stories. In a good *Südwester* storytelling fashion, these stories are set on farms and in the Namibian capital Windhoek and centre on amusing events in the *Südwester* community. Although she makes use of the setting of farming and hunting, and autobiographical references abound in her writing, Kubisch's writing does not read like yet another collection of anecdotes and memories. This is due to her skilful character development and the fact that she narrates, imagines and demonstrates, as opposed to simply telling her own 'real' story. What distinguishes Kubisch's early writing from the bulk of

¹¹³ *Die Ungeduld des weißen Mannes! Typisch! Kann nie warten. Alles muss von jetzt auf gleich gehen. Allen Dingen muss er auf den Grund gehen. Allen Dingen muss er seinen Willen aufzwingen. Dabei hat er in Afrika gar nichts zu suchen – mit seinem Albinofell. Ich sage dir: Lass die Dinge wie sie sind. Misch dich nicht immer ein. Es kommt wie es kommt. Wann lernst du das endlich?*

anecdotal and autobiographical Namibian-German writers, is the fact that her stories are literary fiction.

All but one of the stories in *Vom Bohrloch bis zum Riempiestuhl*, centre around romantic intrigues and somehow end happily in marriage or engagement; *Undine und der Klapperstorch* is the one story which does not quite fit this template. The title and the opening line 'She got the idea to catch a stork when her aunt Agathe gave birth to a beautiful baby boy' (Kubisch, 1992, p. 65)¹¹⁴ alludes to the belief that it is the stork which brings babies into the world. What starts off as a cute story from the perspective of a little girl in small town Omaruru, evolves into a social drama reminiscent of Frank Wedekind's *Spring's Awakening*, unearthing the hypocrisy of a community which refuses to sexually enlighten its children but abandons and judges teenage girls and young women who fall pregnant out of wedlock. The happy ending in this case consists of Undine and her aunt Agathe finding happiness and a future worth living with their illegitimate children. In Undine's case it is without the child's father, in Agathe's case, it remains unclear whether the man she has married is also her child's father.

The social criticism and darkness of humour in Kubisch's writing, such as in *Undine und der Klapperstorch*, *Schattenmädchen* (Doppelpunkt, 2001, pp. 87–103), *Lorbeeren für Loretta* (Doppelpunkt, 2005, pp. 77–89) or *Kleiner Gast im fremden Land* (Doppelpunkt, 2005, pp. 113–120) has mostly gone unrecognised in reviews and discussions and deserves a mention here, perhaps even more so than in Sydow's case (since, unlike Kubisch, Sydow often refers to himself as an outsider). Ingrid Kubisch can be viewed as central to the establishment of Namibian-German writing as thought-provoking and humorous in writing from within the *Südwestler/Namdeutsch* community, a post-colonial writing which needs no 'writing back' to or from the empire (cf. Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 1), writing which exists in its own right.

VERY REAL CONSTRAINTS

Treibholz, *Vom Bohrloch bis zum Riempiestuhl*, *Africamerone*, *Masken Zauber Mythen* and *Umbruchzeiten* are good examples of the potential of Namibian-German writing. They are, however, also good examples of Namibian-German literature as not being part of a well-established literary industry. None of these titles have gone through a professional editing process and this shows, not so much in the spelling and other language errors and typing mistakes, but in technical shortcomings, such as loose ends and/or superfluous narrations and explanations, inconsistencies and convolutions in the plot. It may sound obvious, but the lack of publishing opportunities, financial means and therefore, professional editing and proofreading greatly impact the marketability and distribution of Namibian-German fiction beyond the borders of Namibia and beyond a local and tourist readership.

¹¹⁴ *Die Idee einen Storch zu fangen, kam ihr, als ihre Tante Agathe einen wunderhübschen kleinen Babyjungen bekam.*

A NEW NAMIBIAN-GERMAN LITERATURE EMERGES: *HAUPTSACHE WINDHOEK*

Namibia has had two local publishers for fiction, Wordweaver Publishing House, launched in March 2012 and Martial Publishing which was launched in 2016. The latest collection of Namibian writing in the German language, *Hauptsache Windhoek*¹¹⁵ (Schlettwein & Von Weitersheim, 2013), was published by Wordweaver and consists of short stories, reflections and poetry in German by both older and well-known Namibian authors such as Helmut Sydow and Ingrid Kubisch, but also younger writers and new voices. When compared to the publications mentioned earlier, the effect of thorough editing and support of a professional publisher is clearly visible in *Hauptsache Windhoek*.

Apart from Namibian-German literature receiving a more 'professional' finish, this latest collection also marks a rejuvenation of Namibian writing in German. All of the stories in *Hauptsache Windhoek* still fit into the Namibian-German literary tradition of (auto-) biographical and anecdotal narrative, but at the same time experiment and break with these through point of view, narration technique and choice of genre.

The texts are still strongly rooted in Namibian everyday life, landscape (urban, rural or deserted) and nature (fauna, flora, and wilderness). *Couleur locale* (local colour) plays a central part, but it has become self-explanatory. *Couleur locale* is no longer compulsory and programmatic, but is an integral part of the narrative and is at times already deconstructed.

To illustrate this departure from the *Südwester* storytelling and the venture into what one could tentatively call *Namdeutsch* fiction, we need to have a look at two presentations of the inevitable Namibian sunset and sunrise:

In her short story *Achtundneunzig Gründe*, Tara Al-Jaf literally lets the sun set on the *Südwester* sunset by letting her contemporary young Namibian protagonists experience the magic of the Namibian sun through the urban art form of graffiti, before the real sun sets:

No explosion, no fireworks – just a place from where one watches the sunset ... Mike started to read: 'future, destiny, feelings, air, people, love, travel, whispers, origin, experience, creation' ... Someone had written words along the upper kerb and painted little suns between the words ... The colour play of the Namibian evening sun had begun. Red, yellow, purple and orange glowed with all their might, as though competing for a prize. (Schlettwein & Von Weitersheim, 2013, pp. 79–80)¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ The anthology contains some texts that were translated into German from English and Afrikaans.

¹¹⁶ *Keine Explosion, keine Feuerwerke – nur ein Ort, an dem man sich den Sonnenuntergang angucken konnte. ... Mike begann zu lesen: 'Zukunft, Schicksal, Gefühl, Luft, Menschen, Liebe, Reise, Flüstern, Herkunft, Erfahrung, Kreation'. ...*

Der obere Rand war ringsum mit Worten beschrieben. Zwischen ihnen waren kleine Sonnen aufgemalt. ... Das Farbenspiel der namibischen Abendsonne hatte begonnen. Rot, Gelb, Lila und Orange leuchteten mit ganzer Kraft, als wollten sie sich gegenseitig in einem Wettbewerb übertreffen.

Christiane Otto crafts a sunrise using partially stereotypical, partially innovative metaphors in her short story, *Das letzte Mal*. She then skilfully breaks the contemplation-of-nature stereotype with the idea that in Namibia the beauty of the sunset is 'normal' and with a foreboding of unpleasant heat:

The sun now floats majestically in a layer of blue sky. Above it one can still discern the last red pigments of sunrise, a pale yellow-orange stripe lies over it like a crown. Soon the entire sky will be blue and then it will become hot. A normal day in this beautiful city of Windhoek. With a sad smile he thinks of all the people who will complain about the heat today. (Schlettwein & Von Wietersheim, 2013, p. 177)¹¹⁷

Generally, with the younger generation of Namibian-German authors, there is a tendency towards less explanation and justification and more presentation. The perspective is varied and sometimes consciously broken and the roles literally are neither black nor white anymore. Isabel Moroff's story *D177 from H85* (Schlettwein & Von Wietersheim, 2013, pp. 48–50) written from the perspectives of Joseph, a taxi driver, and Luise, a young, German woman with road rage, is a good example.

The choice of genres has become equally varied. As mentioned previously, young Namibian writers are moving away from the classic, descriptive narration of personal experience with either an omniscient or a first-person narrator towards multiple or broken points of view. We are leaving the mere rendering of anecdotes and the purely autobiographical approach behind, to venture into realms of fiction, such as science fiction, fantasy and the paranormal which were until recently, unheard of in Namibian literature.

One also finds that these genres are interwoven with traditional 'African' storytelling (fables, folklore), such as are found in Monica Nambela's *Bigbrown und der N\$-10-Schein* (Hauptsache Windhoek, 2013, p. 120), in Shilan Anderson's *Das kristallene Ei* (Schlettwein & Von Wietersheim, 2013, p. 34) and Tara Al-Jaf's *Achtundneunzig Gründe*. Nambela, Anderson and Al-Jaf transport *Südwester* storytelling, which relies heavily on the narration of amusing, tragic or unusual past events, into the present and thus makes it contemporary post-independence *Namdeutsch* storytelling and story writing. The perspective is no longer one of looking back, but one of presenting the here and now. The natural symbolism relating to landscape, flora and fauna, which we found to be inherent to the majority of Namibian-German fiction in the first decade after independence, is broken and applied in a contemporary urban setting in an ironic way.

Nambela and Anderson, for example, both use rabbits in the creation of their magically realistic Windhoek microcosms. Nambela's rabbit exploits the idea of the rabbit as a victim, which symbolically stands for the disadvantaged members

¹¹⁷ *Majestätisch schwebt die Sonne jetzt in einer himmelblauen Schicht. Über ihr sind noch die letzten roten Farbpigmente des Sonnenaufgangs zu erkennen, darüber liegt wie eine Krone eine [sic] blasser gelb-oranger Streifen. Bald wird der ganze Himmel blau sein, und dann wird es heiß werden. Ein ganz normaler Tag in dieser schönen Stadt Windhoek. Er denkt an all die Menschen, die heute über die Hitze klagen werden und lächelte traurig.*

of Namibian society, who are too preoccupied with providing food and shelter for their families to be able to take any sort of empowering initiative. When caught in the fangs of the dog, Big Brown, however, the rabbit does admit that he is not the only one with problems. The well-known fable scenario of a weak animal begging to be spared by a carnivore is used to deconstruct social and economic inequality to promote the idea that in the end we all have similar problems, which we will not solve by 'eating' each other.

'Oh dear dog, let me please, please live!' the rabbit pleaded with Big Brown.

'Dear little rabbit, I cannot help you because my friends [Big Brown's human family] could not get up today because they are so hungry. But if I now stand in front of the door with you, they will cook, eat and be happy again. Granny will praise me endlessly. Buruxa and I will play in the bush again and go for walks. But the nicest part is that Granny will serve me the tasty marrow bones.'

'Oh Dog, I am in your mighty paw and I will not escape alive. But give me an opportunity to explain my situation. I understand that you have problems, but I myself have also had sleepless nights because my little ones have not had anything to eat for days, one even died last night. My little ones cannot help me search for food because they are born blind. If you kill me now, you will kill a whole family.' (Schlettwein & Von Wietersheim, 2013, pp. 122–123)¹¹⁸

Big Brown does let the rabbit go free, but unlike in traditional animal fables, the dog is not saved by the rabbit in return. What saves Big Brown and his human family, is a very mundane piece of chewing gum stuck to his paw, which attracts various objects, including a ten dollar note and a Shoprite voucher for N\$800. Folklore, fables, magical realism and the everyday life in Namibia's low-income section of the population, come together to create homebrewed Namibian storytelling in German.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ „Ach lieber Hund, lass mich bitte, bitte leben!“ bat der der Hase Bigbrown. „Liebes Häschen, ich kann dir nicht helfen, denn meine Freunde konnten heute nicht aufstehen, weil sie so großen Hunger haben. Wenn ich nun mit dir vor unserer Haustür stehe, werden sie kochen, essen und wieder glücklich sein. Die Oma wird mich endlos loben. Buruxa und ich werden wieder im Busch spielen und spazieren gehen. Am schönsten ist es aber, dass Oma mir die leckeren Knochen mit Knochenmark servieren wird.“ „Ach Hund, du hast mich in deiner mächtigen Pfote, und ich werde nicht lebend davonkommen. Aber gib mir eine Chance, dir meine Lage zu erklären. Ich verstehe, dass du Probleme hast, aber auch ich habe schlaflose Nächte hinter mir, weil meine kleinen Hasenkinder seit tagen nichts zu essen bekommen haben und eines in der vergangenen Nacht schon gestorben ist. Meine kleinen Hasenkinder können mir nicht beim Essen suchen helfen, weil sie blind zur Welt gekommen sind. Wenn du mich jetzt tötest, tötest du eine ganze Familie.“

¹¹⁹ Monica Nambalela is not a Namibian of German descent; she is a so-called GDR Kid and chooses to write in German.

Anderson's rabbit, like the rabbit in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, functions as a messenger between the real world and the realm of the magical. At the same time this rabbit is quite street-wise in a specifically Namibian way:

'I don't even know your name, nè? Or what you are.'

The man sounded worried. 'Bunolagus monticularis. You can call me Buno,' the squeaky voice answered.

'Bunolagus monticularis, I know that. That is the South African Bushman Rabbit, nè?' ...

'And what are you?' he asked then. 'I mean, you can speak and the hat and everything ..., nè?'

'Oooh, the hat? It's something like work uniform. I am appointed by a globally represented hallucination. There are only about two hundred left of my kind and if your species continues like you do, it will soon be over with Bushman Rabbits. We have to think of our future, so I figured the hallucination trade would be an option because I'll soon be extinct and stuff like that ...' (Schlettwein & Von Wietersheim, 2013, pp. 38–39)¹²⁰

New Namibian-German literature is different from post-colonial German literature, which also has a tendency to use story-telling and local mythology. It does not feature African story-telling and mythology to bridge a gap of understanding between the author and a foreign (third world) travel destination (cf. Lützeler, 2009, p. 105). It deconstructs and at the same time reinstates the understanding Namibians have of their own storytelling tradition.

Similarly the 'voodooesque' mysticism and anecdotal narration of spooky stories present in the *doppelpunkt* collections, is either humorously deconstructed, such as in Erika von Wietersheim's *Verzauberte Stadt*, or incorporated into fantasy as a specific genre, such as mentioned in Shilan Anderson's *Das kristallene Ei*.

The *Südwester* hunter is also not what he used to be. In his story *Gestochen scharf*, Ralf Boll takes the reader on a Namibian hunting experience of a different kind. His protagonist is a single father working for the German radio station of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation. Allergic to the red wasp stings he receives

¹²⁰ „Ich kenne nicht einaml deinen Namen, nech? Oder was du überhaupt bist.”

Der Mann klang besorgt.

„Bunolagus monticularis. Du kannst mich Buno nennen, antwortete die Piepsstimme”.

„Bunolagus monticularis, das kenne ich. Das ist doch der südafrikanische Buschmannhase, ...nech?”...

„Und was bist du?” fragte er dann. „Ich meine, du sprichst und der Hut und alles ..., nech?”

„Aaach, der Hut ist so eine Art Berufskleidung. Ich bin Beauftragter einer global vertretenen Halluzination. Es gibt nur noch an die zweihundert meiner Art, und wenn deine Spezies so weiter macht, hat sich's bald mit dem Buschmannhasen erledigt. Wir müssen uns um die Zukunft Gedanken machen, da dachte ich, das Halluzinationsgewerbe wäre für mich eine Option, weil ich doch vielleicht bald aussterbe und so. ...”

in his suburban Windhoek garden, he ends up nearly dead on the floor of a local pharmacy because he has no medical insurance. When he takes revenge on the insects which stung him, he is heroically armed with six spray cans of insecticide bought at Woermann & Brock and is very relieved that his 'action will not turn into a YouTube video.' (Schlettwein & Von Wietersheim, 2013, p. 167). The humorous angle on the *Südwester* community and its perceptions of heroic masculinity and 'Germaness' which had already been taken by writers such as Ingrid Kubisch, gain a satirical edge in Boll's story:

I still did a St. Vitus' dance on the survivors of the massacre and then engaged myself in the pleasures of a traditional German Frühschoppen; this was well deserved in my opinion and I felt in total harmony with the rest of the population of Windhoek while doing so. My bad conscience – I was after all sitting on a battle field strewn with the bodies of fallen soldiers, and I had not spared the women and children – disappeared after the third beer. (Schlettwein & Von Wietersheim, 2013, p. 168)¹²¹

Hauptsache Windhoek is also the first collection of Namibian-German writing which features the future. Wendula Dahle designs a future ecologically, politically and socially correct utopian vision of Namibia, Nambabwia, in her short story, *Blick zurück in eine andere Zukunft*. While the future setting of this story creates a break with the autobiographical *Südwester* story-telling, there seems to be very little distance between the first-person narrator and the author. The piece does not read like fiction or science-fiction, but more like creative non-fiction.

Sylvia Schlettwein takes it a step further in her dystopian futuristic vision *Am Wendekreis des Schakals*, which combines the animal symbolism popular in *Südwester* storytelling with a post-apocalyptic vision of a post-post colonial Namibia. The Germans are back as the protectorate power after a nuclear catastrophe in Namibia and regulate the lives of what is left of the 'indigenous' population. In *Am Wendekreis des Schakals*, all sections of the Namibian population, including German speaking Namibians, finally become equals – united by the subjugation to the regulations and perceptions of the German protectorate power. The protagonist, the highly pregnant Katja, a German speaking Namibian 'native', might speak the same language as the German soldier, Jörg Kilnitz, who rescues her and her unborn child from being trampled to death during a commotion when waiting for water rations. The common language and the soldier's romantic interest in her might result in Katja and her daughter being 'looked after' and having access to privileges, but Katja and her daughter are not Jörg's equals. Like the domesticated jackals which are not 'allowed beyond this point', the German speaking Namibian natives are no longer

¹²¹ Ich führte noch ein Veitstänzen auf den Überlebenden des Massakers aus und gab mich dann den Freuden eines traditionellen deutschen Frühschoppens hin; das hatte ich mir meiner Meinung nach verdient und fühlte mich dabei auch ganz im Einklang mit der Restbevölkerung Windhoeks. Das schlechte Gewissen – ich saß ja nun auf einem Schlachtfeld übersät mit den Leichen von gefallenen Soldaten, und Frauen und Kinder hatte ich auch nicht verschont, verschwand nach dem dritten Bier.

part of the power of the German (former) motherland: *Wir müssen draußen bleiben* (Schlettwein & Von Wiertersheim, 2013, p. 105).

Am Wendekreis des Schakals can be read as an exploration of the complex relationship between Germany and Namibia as nations and between German expatriates and Namibians of German descent, i.e. German speaking Namibian ‘natives’, through speculative fiction. This is where post-colonial writing meets the multiple points of view of post-modernism, where roles are inversed and redefined, only to be reversed and defined back, but the reinstatement of a colonial or pre-colonial status quo is clearly out of the question.

A RARE GEM IN THE MAKING?

Every literature is only as productive as its writers and only as engaging as its texts, and being classified as colonial, post-colonial or post-post colonial, does not change that. Being part of a literary discourse does, however, have an influence on whether a literature is recognised and on how it is perceived. It would, for example, be interesting to see what kind of response Namibian-German literature in an English translation would elicit, which texts would still be recognisable as coming from Namibian-German authors and which ones would be recognised as having a Namibian authorship, but not necessarily a German-Namibian one. (cf. Von Maltzan, 2014, p. 97). Namibian-German literature needs to become part of a discourse, not for the sake of being ‘discoursed’, but for the sake of becoming what it could be, a small but engaging and sought-after literature. I would suggest that Namibian-German literature becomes the rare gem of post-colonial literature because where else would one find indigenous Africans writing in German about themselves?

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22

Books, words and truth in Namibia: The contribution of New Namibia Books (1990–2005)

Jane Katjavivi

INTRODUCTION

In Otjiherero, one of the major languages spoken in central Namibia, and in Oshiwambo, which comprises two national languages and various dialects of the central northern regions of the country, the word for books is *omambo*. In Otjiherero, *omambo* also means ‘truth’. Indeed, the first books in Namibia, as in so many other African countries, were religious ones. These books were promoted quite literally as the truth – the word of God and of God’s people.

During the colonial period of German and the later South African rule, most books in use in the country were in the domain of the church or in the educational system. That system was, however, structured to divide people and keep them away from information and any ideas other than those propagated by the regime, which again believed that what it was teaching was the truth.

As has been discussed in earlier chapters, new truths emerged during the course of the liberation struggle – publications putting forward the point of view of the Namibian people, and in particular the main nationalist movement the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO), in their campaign against South African rule. When this struggle culminated in independence in 1990, widespread changes to the educational system required new textbooks and this encouraged the expansion of local book production. In the new political climate, Namibian views

of the country's history and society were expressed in book form, for the schools and the university, through government and non-governmental organisations, and by individual authors writing their stories.

This was the setting for the establishment of the independent publishing company New Namibia Books.

This chapter locates New Namibia Books within the history of the book in Namibia, and examines the contribution of New Namibia Books titles to Namibian writing, in particular regarding the experience of war, exile, return and reconciliation.

I have drawn on various sources, but mostly on my experience in book development in Namibia since independence, and in particular, as the founder, publisher and director of New Namibia Books from 1990 until the sale of the list in 2000.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLISHING IN NAMIBIA

The birth of publishing in Namibia goes back to the arrival of the missionaries who established printing presses to translate the Bible and other religious documents. The first printing press was established near Walvis Bay in the 19th Century. Many of the early publications were in German, as the predominant mission influence in central and southern Namibia was the German Lutheran mission. There were however, also local language editions of the Bible and other church materials. The first book to be published in Namibia, in 1855, was a translation of Luther's catechism into Khoekhoegowab (Reiner, Hillebrecht & Katjavivi, 1994, p. 1).

The oldest surviving publishing company in Namibia is the ELOC Press, belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, and initially named ELCIN Press. This was established in Oniipa in northern Namibia in 1901, by the Finnish Lutheran mission. ELCIN Press developed the first readers and grammars in local languages for Namibian schools. Later, it was to become one of the outlets for an expression of opposition to South African rule.

During the early years of the 20th Century, while Namibia was still a German colony, local publishing developed beyond the religious content to include pamphlets, booklets, and self-help brochures in German, aimed at guiding new settlers in their conquest of the land. Textbooks and literature required by the German-speaking population were imported, while the very limited education for black Namibians remained within the ambit of the missions. Much of this local publishing activity, however, ceased after the end of the First World War, when South Africa took control of Namibia.

Under South African rule, new settlers arrived, most of whom were Afrikaans-speaking. The language of official publications changed to Afrikaans, but locally published texts were still mostly administrative and practical.

After the Second World War, there was an increase of local publishing, including some children's books and recreational reading materials. On the educational front, a number of separate educational syllabuses and different textbooks were increasingly introduced for black and white schools, and indeed, for the different

ethnic communities in Namibia, as the South African apartheid laws were extended to cover the country. Textbooks were imported from South Africa for many years. The mission presses were mainly confined to religious books.

In 1977, Gamsberg Publishers was established and developed initially as a local publisher by concentrating on African language publishing for the schools. Many of its early books were translations into local Namibian languages of books which had been published in South Africa. But it also began to publish readers in local languages, written by black Namibians. As some subject syllabuses were localised in the 1980s, Gamsberg also published textbooks in History, Geography, Environmental Science, English and Afrikaans.

In 1990, Gamsberg merged with the multinational publisher, Macmillan, and became Gamsberg Macmillan. It later changed its name to Macmillan Education Namibia and in 2013 changed its profile once again to become Namibia Publishing House. It remains the largest publishing company in Namibia and in the more than 27 years since the country's independence, it has published a broad range of school subjects as well as academic, environmental, historical, literary texts and children's books.

The first published book by a black Namibian author was *Omasanekeero ja ungurua i Gottfried Tjiharine, Omuzuvarise*, a book of religious parables in Otjiherero, written by Gottfried Tjiharine and published in 1913 (Reiner et al., 1994, p. 4). Probably the first non-religious book by a black Namibian was Hans Namuhuja's *Omahodhi gaavali*, published by the Finnish Mission Press at ELCIN in 1959 (ibid., p. 12). Gamsberg's first published title was an Oshindonga reader, *Tokongo*, written by Petrus Amakali (1977). Black authorship did not really develop, however, until the 1970s and 1980s.

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AND THE EXPANSION OF PUBLISHING POST-1990

After independence, the Namibian Government introduced sweeping educational reforms, created new common syllabuses, introduced English as the language of instruction in schools from Grade 4, and developed a more learner-centred teaching methodology.

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Education aimed at purchasing one textbook per core subject per learner per Grade. (The structure and name of the Ministry have changed a number of times since 1990 but I use the generic term throughout this chapter.) By the end of the 1990s, the number of school-going children was around 500,000, with just over 200,000 in Grades 1–3, over 150,000 in Grades 4–7, 85,000 in Grades 8–10, and 24,000 in Grades 11–12 (Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), 1999, p. 45, Table 22). This was, therefore, a substantial market. Donor support allowed the Ministry to open up the textbook catalogue and develop criteria for the submission and approval of manuscripts to meet the needs of the new syllabuses which were introduced from 1991 to 2000. A list of approved titles was circulated to the regions and schools, with a maximum of three titles per subject for

each grade, from which schools could choose. This created competition between publishers but, in the early years of the new curricula, the first publisher to obtain the approval of a textbook could be assured of a significant sale of many thousands of copies.

Largely because of these educational changes, local educational publishing expanded during the first ten years after independence. Four new commercial publishing companies were established: Longman Namibia (1990), New Namibia Books (1990), Out of Africa (1995) and Africagraphix (1995). The publication of general titles therefore also increased, as publishers had more resources available.

By the year 2000, there were nearly 2,000 locally published books in print in the official language, English, and in languages approved for use in schools, which are spoken by the communities in Namibia and defined by the Ministry of Education as 'national languages'. These are Afrikaans, German, Jul'hoansi, Khoekhoegowab, Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Otjiherero, Rukwangali, Rumanyo (previously referred to as Rucgiriku), Setswana, Silozi, and Thimbukushu (Portuguese has been more recently added). *The Namibian Books in Print 1999–2000* (Association of Namibian Publishers, 1999) listed over 1300 general titles, i.e. excluding school textbooks. These included children's books, poetry, life stories and literature, books on Namibian history, politics and society, gender, human rights, the environment, tourism and development.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NAMIBIA BOOKS

New Namibia Books was established in September 1990 with the broad aim of developing Namibian writing. The introductory leaflet stated the company's aims: 'New Namibia Books is an independent Namibian publishing company dedicated to building peace, justice and unity in Namibia, the promotion of Namibian literature and culture, and the development of new books for the new education system.'

As publisher, I entered into an agency agreement with Heinemann Publishers and the Zimbabwe Publishing House. Heinemann provided the financial input by giving an advance against the commission which they expected would be earned from future sales in Namibia of their textbooks and titles in their African Writers Series.

A former Guidance teacher, Marietjie Pottas, approached me soon afterwards with a manuscript she had already submitted to the Ministry of Education for the new Life Skills subject to be introduced in the schools at Junior Secondary Level. The Ministry had approved her manuscript for Grade 8 learners and this became New Namibia Books' first title, *The Namibian Way* (Pottas, 1991). In the absence of any competing titles, we had guaranteed sales of 28,000 copies (one per learner). It enabled us to buy a state-of-the-art Apple Macintosh computer and desktop publishing software, and get the company off the ground.

Between 1990 and 2000, New Namibia Books published 63 new titles plus some revised editions of textbooks which we had developed. These included books on Namibian history and society, democracy, human rights and law, traditional

authority, educational books for learners and teachers, children's books, traditional stories, and Namibian literature and life stories. A further seven books were published by New Namibia Books from 2000 to 2005, when it was under new ownership.

PARTNERSHIPS

As do many small, independent, publishers, New Namibia Books partnered with other organisations and publishers to bring out a wide range of titles.

History and society

New Namibia Books published the following books in the fields of history and society, parliamentary democracy, human rights and law, and Southern African women's writing (see Table 22.1).

Table 22.1 New Namibia Books titles on history, society, democracy and law

Author	Title	Date	Partner
John Kinahan	<i>Pastoral Nomads of the Central Namib Desert</i>	1991	Namibia Archaeological Trust
David Lush	<i>Last Steps to Uhuru: An eye-witness account of Namibia's transition to Independence</i>	1993	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
National Assembly of Namibia and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs	<i>Namibia: The Parliament and Democracy: Symposium Report</i>	1991	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Padraig O'Malley	<i>Uneven Paths: Advancing Democracy in Southern Africa. Proceedings of a colloquium in Namibia in January 1992</i>	1993	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
Office of the Speaker of the National Assembly	<i>National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia Standing Rules and Orders</i> Plus a pocketbook edition of the book.	1993	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
Office of the Speaker of the National Assembly	<i>National Council of the Republic of Namibia Standing Rules and Orders</i> Plus a pocketbook edition of the book.	1993	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

Table 22.1 (continued)

Author	Title	Date	Partner
University of Namibia Human Rights Documentation Centre, UNESCO Social Sciences Programme in Southern Africa and UN Information Centre	<i>Human Rights Education and Advocacy in Namibia in the 1990s: A Tapestry of Perspectives. A collection of papers submitted at a workshop on Education, Training and Information concerning Human Rights in Namibia, Windhoek, 12–13 May 1993</i>	1995	University of Namibia
Office of the Speaker of the National Assembly	<i>Namibian Parliamentary Directory 1996/97</i>	1997	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
Carl-J Hellberg	<i>Mission Colonialism and Liberation: The Lutheran Church in Namibia 1840–1966</i>	1997	Co-published with Verbum Publishers, Sweden
University of Namibia	<i>Human Rights and Democracy in Southern Africa: Papers presented at the Conference Cultivating Co-operation amongst Human Rights Institutions in the UNITWIN Network in Southern Africa</i>	1998	University of Namibia
F M d’Engelbronner-Kolff, M O Hinz and J L Sindano	<i>Traditional Authority and Democracy in Southern Africa: Proceedings from the workshop Traditional Authorities in the Nineties – Democratic Aspects of Traditional Government in Southern Africa, 15–16 November 1995, Windhoek</i>	1998	University of Namibia
Herbert M Jauch	<i>Affirmative Action in Namibia: Redressing the Imbalances of the Past?</i>	1998	Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)

Children’s books

At independence, there were few Namibian children’s books and almost none in English. New Namibia Books became actively involved in the development and publishing of 27 children’s books – both traditional stories (see below) and contemporary ones. Seventeen of these titles were in English and ten were in Khoekhoegowab.

Jennifer Davis's *Song of the Namib* was New Namibia Books' second title (Davis, 1991), published with the support of Oxfam (UK). It is a lyrical poem about the desert and the desert wind, with four-colour illustrations.

Five books were co-published with the Build a Book Collective, a non-governmental organisation which was dedicated to the development and promotion of Namibian children's stories, with sponsorship from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The books comprised stories developed at a workshop of authors, illustrators and publishers, in which New Namibia Books participated. Two of these books had four-colour illustrations: *Vandje and the storm* (Hoebel, 1992) and *Dragon's breath adventure* (Rudd, 1992). Three had black and white line drawings: *Mandi's wheels* (Beake, 1992), *Water from the rock* (Haarhoff, 1992), and *Does Kakulu's mother use magic?* (Ridgway, 1992).

My eyes can hear... My hands can talk (ClaSH, 1995) was a book of photographs and text about hearing-impaired children in Namibia which was developed by the Association for Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairments of Namibia. *The orphan calf and the magical cheetah* (Cheetah Conservation Fund, 1996) was a four-colour illustrated book of children's poems and stories about the cheetah.

Children's stories and riddles in verse (Vatsa, 1995) was a licensed edition of a book published by Fourth Dimension Publishers in Nigeria. *Kalinzu and the Oxpeckers* (Grimsdell, 1993) was a joint publication with David Philip publishers in South Africa.

Rattletat (Appiah, 1995) was a story by Ghanaian author Peggy Appiah with illustrations from her grandson and his primary schoolmates at the Windhoek International School. *Legs, bones and eyes* (Haarhoff, 1994) was a trilogy in one volume (with a South African edition brought out by Puffin Books in 1996). *Ridgeback Joe and the boy* (McClain, 1994) was an adventure story.

New Namibia Books educational titles

Two books were developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Culture, through workshops with teachers, to accompany a radio programme aimed at upgrading the English language skills of teachers. These were *Let's speak English: An English course for Namibia, Book 1 and Book 2* (1992).

New Namibia Books also published the Ministry's baseline assessment *How much do Namibia's children learn in school? Findings from the 1992 National Learner Baseline Assessment* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1994).

Together with Heinemann Publishers, New Namibia Books developed a completely new Junior Secondary Science textbook course, *Physical Science for Namibia*, for Grades 8, 9 and 10 (Grade 8: Curry, Linow & Clegg, 1992; Grade 9: Curry, Linow, Brits, Speelman & Tjikuua, 1993; Grade 10: Curry, Linow, Speelman & Tjikuua, 1994). Heinemann provided the editorial guidance while New Namibia Books held twice-weekly editorial meetings with the authors, over a period of six months for each book, to develop and critique the text and the proposed activities. The authors were Namibian teachers. The editorial adviser was Andrew Clegg, who then worked with the In-Service Training and Assistance for Namibian

Teachers (INSTANT) project to upgrade the teaching of Science and Mathematics in Namibia, which was funded by the European Union. The books were co-published with Heinemann, and revised editions were also published in the late 1990s.

New Namibia Books then went on to develop a new four-textbook primary school course, *Discovering Science* which was also co-published with Heinemann, for the Natural Science and Health Education curriculum. We worked once again with Namibian teachers and the New Namibia Books Science Editor, Nepeti Nicanor (Grade 4: Hailonga, Nicanor & Olivier, 1994; Grade 5: Nicanor, Hailonga & Olivier, 1995; Grade 6: Nicanor & Speelman, 1997; and Grade 7: Nicanor & Speelman, 1998). Revised editions of these books were also published.

These two textbook courses were the first science courses designed specifically for Namibian syllabuses rather than adapted from courses developed for other countries. They were hailed as learner-centred, discovery-based and had positive images of black children, girls and women, in the illustrations. At the Mbapira Awards for the Written Word, held in Windhoek in 1998, which was organised by Democratic Media Holdings, the *Discovering Science* books received an award for best layout. The Mbapira Awards were intended to be a regular event but unfortunately there have been no further awards since 1998.

As sales of the two science textbooks courses took off, New Namibia Books was able to use the income this generated to publish its literature and general titles.

TURNING THE ORAL INTO A WRITTEN TRADITION

After independence, a number of projects were set up to record and transcribe stories from the oral tradition. New Namibia Books published sixteen books of traditional stories.

The Stolen Water and Other Stories

The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia (Davis, 1993), published with support from SIDA, comprises stories about people and animals collected and retold by Jennifer Davis, and also the creation stories of some of Namibia's communities.

In the Preface, Davis (1993, p. vii.) wrote: 'In the oral tradition, storytelling is used to entertain, to educate and to explore the meaning of life. Folk-tales explain natural phenomena and the conflict between good and evil. The young learn wisdom and their history through these stories.'

There was much soul-searching at New Namibia Books about whether or not to publish each of these stories separately in the A5 size, and bring them out as a series, with each book being affordable for parents. We decided, however, to keep the stories together in one volume, since Namibian traditional tales had always been looked at separately in the past, as belonging exclusively to one or another ethnic group. In the end, the book was printed in the A4 format, with four-colour illustrations, designed for children. This, therefore, became the first combined

collection of Namibian traditional tales from different communities around the country, published together in English.

Tsî i ge ge hâhe

Tsî i ge ge hâhe was a series of ten books of traditional Nama folk tales, told in the original Khoekhoegowab language (Schmidt, 1995), published with the financial assistance of the editor Sigrid Schmidt and the Namibian-German Foundation for Cultural Cooperation.

The books comprised 29 stories which had been collected over 30 years by the German folklorist Sigrid Schmidt. The stories tell of ghosts, battles and strange creatures. They were transcribed from recordings and retained the full energy of their original oral form, often with violent aspects which had not been changed by the compiler.

Schmidt was keen to see the stories published because she was concerned that the oral record of them might be lost. She had discovered during her trips to Namibia that people who had previously told her some of these stories could no longer remember them.

Very few titles exist in Khoekhoegowab and the language is in danger of dying out. The books were published in conjunction with the Namibian Children's Book Forum in the hope, as the forum's chairperson, Professor Andree-Jeanne Tötemeyer,¹²² put it, 'that the Namibians who can speak but not read this language will now also become readers and writers of Khoekhoegowab' (Schmidt, 1995, inside cover).

The *Tsî i ge ge hâhe* books were published using a new orthography approved by the Ministry of Education. Khoekhoegowab teachers were, however, not familiar with this and were not comfortable with the orthography. The books were unfortunately not bought in Namibia except for a few copies for the libraries. Interestingly, however, they were later bought for use in schools in the Northern Cape in South Africa, where there are also Khoekhoegowab-speaking communities.

Namibia Oral Tradition Project

In 1994, the Namibia Oral Tradition Project (NOTP), a joint venture between the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Namibia, held a traditional story writing competition which drew some 1500 entries in ten Namibian national languages and in English. The aim of the project was, 'to promote the oral culture of Namibia as a dynamic and living tradition, to build awareness amongst Namibians of this rich and diverse tradition, thus working towards building a Namibian identity, and to involve communities actively in this process' (NOTP, 1996, back cover).

The competition rules defined tradition in broad terms and this encouraged people to submit a wide range of material, from myths and folktales to historical and cultural accounts, as well as modern traditions and the interaction between

¹²² See Chapter 20 for more on children's literature and the Namibian Children's Book Forum.

the traditional and the modern. Publishers were invited to bid for the right to publish collections of these stories which were to be selected in conjunction with the organiser of the NOTP, Ted Scott. New Namibia Books was the only publisher who was interested.

Selections from these stories were published in a series of five titles in 1996–7. Three of the books have four-colour illustrations and are for children: *The Secret of the Crocodile and other animal stories from Namibia*; *Giliwe and Diliwe and other monster stories*; and *The Tortoise who saw the World and other tortoise stories from Namibia*. At the 1998 Mbapira Awards, *Giliwe and Diliwe* received the award for best cover design and best text in the children's book category. The illustrator was one of Namibia's best-known artists, Joseph Madisia.

The last two NOTP books had black and white illustrations by Joseph Madisia and were aimed at an older audience: *The Moon People and other Namibian stories*; and *Muzimbikana and other Namibian Adventures*.

The story 'The Moon People', from the book of the same name, dramatically questions the interaction between the traditional and the modern. The narrator tells the reader how the San believe that when the Moon is full it is:

waving with green grasses. Then its pans are overflowing. Large birds fly over the water. Fish are abundant in the water. And its dunes are alive with all kinds of game. (NOTP, 1997, p. 12)

He also explains the significance of the Moon to the San:

We are the Moon People. After we die, the good people ... rest awhile in their graves. And then they walk to the Moon. Everyone is very happy and content in the Moon Kalahari. They are never hungry there. (ibid.)

The narrator then addresses the reader directly:

You say I have told you a charming story? You wish you could tell me that you believe it to be true? But you have to tell me that Americans travelled to the Moon in some kind of super aeroplane.

They took pictures, you say, they sent back pictures of their footsteps on the Moon. They sent them back so that people can see with their own eyes. ...

The Moon is a desert, you say. ... Nothing lives there, there is no game at all. (ibid.)

He goes on to question the nature and ownership of story:

You say you're sorry to have to tell me this. Why are you sorry? I know you are not a liar and a thief – and I, I am also not a liar or a thief. The Americans travelled to the Moon in some super machines. Why not? My people, after they die and rest, walk to the Moon. (ibid.)

He concludes by addressing the issue of truth:

My friend, you and I are neither thieves nor liars. You will not steal my story. And I won't steal your story. But if the Moon People cannot believe in their full moon, what is the meaning of our struggle in this mean old desert? (NOTP, 1997, p. 14)

POETRY

There are many Namibian poets, but it is always hard to sell poetry books. Nevertheless, New Namibia Books published three.

Liz McClain's *Desert Detritus* (1992) is a philosophical prose poem about the Namib Desert, with four-colour illustrations by Christine Marais, one of Namibia's best-known artists.

New Namibia Books also published two poetry anthologies, *The Innermost Explosion: poems from Augustineum Secondary School* (Namibia Young Writers' Club, 1993), and *New Namibian poetry and fiction* (The Kitso Poets, 1998). Both were collections of poems from small writers' groups, the first a group of secondary school students, and the second 'a non-profit poetry group which uses traditional instruments, choral songs and poetry in the promotion of the African oral tradition and the enrichment of literature in Namibia' (back page).

In the Foreword to *The Innermost Explosion*, the Namibia Young Writers' Club Executive wrote:

The majority of books in Namibia, both fiction and non-fiction, are foreign. Most of them do not reflect our Namibian environment and do not express our experiences of life. ... We must write about ourselves and our lives. The Namibian Young Writers Club was formed in response to this need to express our experiences. (Namibia Young Writers' Club, 1993, p. v)

The book contained seventeen poems by students from Grades 8 to 12, and some black and white line drawings. The poems touched on themes of school, life and death, love, the state of Africa, the Namibian environment, and political change.

The Innermost Explosion was a 28-page book printed in a trimmed A5 size and staple stitched. The costs of printing the book using traditional off-set litho were, however, high for such a slim volume and this made the book expensive.

When it came to the second poetry collection, we were more circumspect. 'We had originally thought we would collect poetry and put together a Namibian anthology,' I wrote to Joshua Kaumbi of the Kitso Poets. 'However, we have now moved away from this idea, and indeed, away from the traditional idea of a book. The reason for this is that the cost of production of a poetry book is high, and the market is still small and relatively untested here. We do not want to produce a book that will be

so expensive to buy that it is priced out of the market we are trying to reach, which is young Namibians (Katjavivi, J. to J. Kaumbi, April 6, 1998).'

The result – *New Namibian poetry and fiction* – was therefore conceived as a desktop-published newsletter for young Namibian authors of poetry and short fiction. It was printed on a Risograph duplication machine on A3 paper, folded to A4 size and stapled. The price was kept very low, at N\$5.50, a third of the price of *The Innermost Explosion*. Issue No. One of *New Namibian poetry and fiction* focused on works by The Kitso Poets, under their chosen title of *We Opened the Door and We Saw Ourselves*, with a front cover reproduction of a linocut print by the Angolan Artist Rui Quimio.

'[This] represents an immediate and dynamic change on the Namibian literary scene – and is an important step forward,' stated the back of the publication (The Kitso Poets, 1998, back page), but unfortunately, there were no further issues. The Kitso Poets nevertheless continued to perform their poetry and during the late 2000s, they and other poets established the monthly Spoken Word gathering.¹²³

LITERATURE AND LIFE STORIES

Life in Namibia under South African rule, and the experiences of the liberation struggle, are explored in seven New Namibia Books titles which deal with themes of war, exile, return and reconciliation. These include both fiction and autobiography.

Tears over the Deserts

Tears over the Deserts is the life story of one of Namibia's top musicians, Jackson Kaujeua (1994). He tells of his rural childhood herding goats and drinking *omaere* (sour milk); of traditional Ovaherero life and the ceremonies of circumcision and transition to adulthood; of his worlds of school and work and the call of music which charted his adult career. The deprivations and discrimination of South African rule bear down on him. His family is forcibly removed from southern Namibia to the north-west and eventually Kaujeua himself is forced into exile. His story is however, not one of defeat. 'At once both touching and humorous, *Tears over the Deserts* ... is a telling reflection of the spirit of Namibians even in times of great adversity,' says the book's back cover (Kaujeua, 1994). After the book had gone out of print, Kaujeua republished it himself in 2009, with a CD of his music included.

On the Run

On the Run, a short novel by Kapache Victor (1994), was the first example of Namibian literature in English to be set for study at the University of Namibia. It is a political thriller set in the late 1980s, about a group of four schoolboys fleeing the security police after participating in protests against the Bantu education system. The author successfully conveys the tension felt by the schoolboys as they hide out

¹²³ See Chapter 8 on Spoken Word in Namibia.

in a relative's house, fearing the arrival of the police, and try to decide whether to stay in the country or leave and go into exile.

We have to find a way out,' One-Boy said, trying to keep his voice low. They had assembled in the tiny room shared by Tangeni and his younger brother. They were all there: Tangeni Nangolo, Fessie Unotjari, One-Boy Kalomo and Jimmy Uaendere. ... It was the summer of 1988. ... All of them except Jimmy were leaders of a recent school boycott. ... Now they were facing the inevitable. The enemy, the Boers, were tracing all the top leadership of the student movement. Sooner or later their luck would turn. (Victor, 1994, p. 1)

At the launch of the book in February 1994, Victor spoke of his reason for writing it: 'I was bored, I used to read a lot and I didn't have anything to read and I didn't have money to buy a book or a newspaper.'

The Price of Freedom

The Price of Freedom (Namhila, 1997),¹²⁴ is a moving account of author Ellen Namhila's personal story of exile and return. She was prompted to write the book in an attempt to reconcile the traumatic experiences of exile with the reality of return to Namibia after independence in 1990. The unnamed reviewer in *Kaleidoscope* (1998) writes: 'Namhila's story is an incredible mixed bag of events and issues, ranging from refugee status, single motherhood, and personal crisis, to national struggle, South Africa's secret war, International Aid, and racial stereotypes. However, Namhila writes simply, insightfully, sincerely, and is sometimes unnervingly calm.'

New Namibia Books Editor Margie Orford¹²⁵ worked with Namhila on the book and helped her to unlock memories she had put away, particularly concerning the South African armed forces' attack on the Namibian refugee camp at Cassinga, Angola, on 4 May 1978, where Namhila had been present.

Homecoming: the GDR Kids of Namibia

Homecoming: the GDR Kids of Namibia, edited by Constance Kenna (1999), is a compilation of prose, poetry and fiction by young Namibians schooled in the German Democratic Republic who were brought home abruptly, soon after independence – most of them in their teenage years – and the difficulties they had in adjusting to an unknown motherland, a different social system, and the extended family structures. The writings are poignant but positive – dealing with the question of their place within Namibia, and also with the common experiences of childhood and growing up.¹²⁶

An American scholar and teacher, Constance Kenna, pieced together their story in a clear and accessible way. Fascinated by young black men and women she met

¹²⁴ For more detailed discussion on Namibian women's autobiography, see Chapter 3.

¹²⁵ See Chapter 2 written by Margie Orford.

¹²⁶ For a detailed discussion of the writings of one of the GDR Kids, Misheke Matongo, see Chapter 5.

in Namibia who spoke very good German, Kenna interviewed some of them, and their caregivers in Germany and Namibia, and others associated with the return of these and other young Namibians at the time of independence. She encouraged them to write, but did not prescribe what form of writing they should use or what themes they should examine. The result is a mixture of texts – prose and poetry – which reflects different individual and group experiences. Some of these pieces deal with the question of cultural conflict, identity and trying to settle in back home in a ‘new’ country, Namibia, and some do not. That is also one of the strengths of the book. A German edition, *Der ‘DDR Kinder’ von Namibia: Heimkehrer in ein fremdes Land*, was published by Klaus Hess Verlag at the same time.

In Conflict

In Conflict, by Anthony Feinstein (1998), is the story of a young South African medical officer conscripted to serve in the South African Defence Force (SADF) in northern Namibia in 1983. Posted to Tsandi, near Ongandjera, in the heartland of the national liberation movement, SWAPO, he soon realised the extent of the resistance to the presence of the SADF. A surprise encounter with SWAPO fighters changed the course of his life.

This book is based on the diary which Feinstein kept at the time. Although it took fifteen years for his story to be published, it was an important part of the process of his coming to terms with his experiences in Namibia and his role in the war. It explains how he was forced to confront his own complicity in upholding the South African regime of occupation in Namibia:

I knew that we were lost, completely, hopelessly lost. We were physically lost in our environment, reliant and childishly dependent on our trackers to take us north or south, to water, back to base. We were morally lost in a conflict of our own making, victims of our propaganda that had for decades been telling us how righteous we were to stand and fight the godless enemy called communism and how grateful the Western nations were to us for providing this bulwark against totalitarianism. Each day we acted out a lie in a futile, destructive mission. (Feinstein, 1998, p. 60)

Although not written by a Namibian, this is an important story for Namibia. At the launch of *In Conflict* on 26 November 1998, Ben Ulenga, a former Namibian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, and former member of the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), against whom Feinstein had fought, said:

I wish that everyone on whose land this war was fought and whose homesteads were left in smoke, could read this book, to peep into the mind of the South African soldier for just one minute. Then we would start the long route to understanding those events and start the process of dealing with them.

'Riveting. ... An extremely fine book. ... Deserving of a wide readership in South Africa and Africa,' wrote Ronnie Kasrils, then South African Deputy Minister of Defence, to the author, on an official letterhead. There was however, little interest in the book in South Africa. It was not until the late 2000s that other books written by white South Africans about their experiences during the war in Namibia and Angola were published. A number of them glorified the experience.

Meekulu's Children

At the launch of *In Conflict*, Ben Ulenga said that he wished that the story of those whose homesteads which were burnt in the war could be written. *Meekulu's Children*, by Kaleni Hiyalwa (2000), does just that.¹²⁷ A novel set in northern Namibia during the South African military occupation, it has as its main character a young girl, Ketja, whose family is killed by the SADF, and who grows up in an increasingly militarised world. Other children from the village leave to join SWAPO to fight for freedom, or get roped in to join the Koevoet forces fighting against SWAPO. Ketja's grandmother Meekulu provides the stability which helps her to survive, and is a symbol of reconciliation.

In the lead-up to independence, the SWAPO fighters return and Ketja is reunited with her brother and sister. Meekulu does not live to see them, but there is a positive element to the ending of the book. Ketja realises that she will have to be the head of the family after Meekulu has gone, and a mother to all the children who survived the war. 'There is something more exciting,' she muses. 'Freedom is coming. Our souls, our minds and our hearts will be freed from sorrow forever' (Hiyalwa, 2000, p. 113).

Reviewing *Meekulu's Children* for *The Namibian*, Heike Becker (2000) stated:

Kaleni Hiyalwa's fictional account of life in the northern Namibian war zone is fascinating in many different aspects. For one, it is the first piece of post-colonial Namibian writing – fictional or non-fictional – that is entirely devoted to the experiences of 'ovakalimo', or the 'stayers'.

Becker goes on:

This new novel does no longer belong to the orbit of what has been called 'struggle literature'. Although the war for liberation is its main theme, it is not a straightforward, 'politically correct' account. Rather, *Meekulu's Children* shows a powerful personal and collective development of Ketja and her community, Meekulu and the people of Elombe.

Hiyalwa and Namhila brought strong women's voices into Namibian writing – weaving the struggle of the domestic sphere and growth to self-knowledge with their stories of war and exile.

¹²⁷ For a more detailed discussion of *Meekulu's Children*, see Chapter 16.

Coming on Strong: Writing by Namibian Women

New Namibia Books had received various writings from women, some of which were unfinished, and many of which did not stand on their own. Margie Orford and Nepeti Nicanor sought more contributions by writing to Namibian women, women's groups and NGOs, and through radio announcements. It was a broad but undefined search – no themes or topics were prescribed. This resulted in *Coming on Strong: Writing by Namibian Women*, edited by Orford and Nicanor (1996), and published with support from Oxfam Canada. It is a collection of poetry, fiction and life stories which tackle life in exile and in the war zone in northern Namibia. The book also includes writing dealing with teenage pregnancy, life as a single mother, bereavement, child abuse, the life of a domestic worker, extended families, and cultural acclimatisation. One of the strengths of the book is that it includes writing from many different women, cutting across class, race, ethnic, urban and rural lines. Reviewing the book in *West Africa*, Bunmi Akpata-Ohohe (1997) wrote:

Every so often, a record stops you in your tracks. If it is possible for a book to stop you in your tracks, this is one of them. ... *Coming on Strong* is a gripping anthology of fiction and non-fiction set in Namibia. ... It has a strong and wider relevance to other women, both African and non-African. All women, whether living under war or in a peaceful part of the world, face similar problems.

A striking aspect of the book was that it contained some very short pieces of writing from women in literacy classes in the north of Namibia. These would not stand on their own but were held together in thematic sections, allowing the authors' voices to be heard. The range of styles was diverse and only minimal editing was done. The editors felt that the authenticity of expression was more important than conventions of grammar and punctuation. The women who had written these pieces were surprised to see their contributions published and said they thought no one would be interested in their stories.

Mary Jay, then Director of the African Books Collective, which is owned by African publishers who have come together to distribute and sell books published in Africa to the rest of the world, referred to *Coming on Strong* as among the most remarkable books by women in Southern Africa: 'The stories are simple and powerful, weaving a tapestry of Namibia' (Jay, 1996).

Roberta Hatcher of Lawrence University, Wisconsin, reviewing the book in *Feminist Collections*, stated: 'The book is an extraordinary document whose concerns resonate forcefully with contemporary investigations of nation and gender, of popular memory and forgetting, of testimony and women's writing' (Hatcher, 1997).

At the 1998 Mbapira Awards, *Coming on Strong* received the award for best text in non-fiction.

Celebrating Writing

At the launch of *Meekulu's Children*, Hiyalwa spoke about how she started writing poetry in exile to express her feelings and 'chase away exile loneliness and the longing to see my mother and family'. She also wrote poetry 'to express my longing to belong', 'to express my pride and dignity that seemed to dwindle away whenever I was in the midst of people who only considered me as a refugee.' She said: 'It was through writing poems that I ripped off sadness from my heart and dark cloud from my soul.'

As Hiyalwa said at her book launch in July 2000, she feels she has:

A duty to collect and record the echoes, the cries, aspirations and expectations, praise songs and stories of people. ... Namibia is full of stories to be written about. I believe that in every footstep of our walk there is a story to be told. But for us to discover this gold, we have to be willing and be made aware of how we can pick the story out from under our feet in order to record them for all of us to enjoy reading them.

In this context, the writing process was cathartic for Hiyalwa. The launches of some of the New Namibia Books titles discussed here were also cathartic. Contributors to *Coming on Strong* and *Homecoming*, and other young Namibians with similar experiences, read or performed their stories. In the case of *Homecoming*, the launch performances were held over two nights, with young Namibians who had been exiled in other countries adding their stories, and young musicians and rappers performing.

THE BUSINESS OF PUBLISHING

Writers and publishers do not exist without each other and if the business side of publishing does not work, writers have no outlet. New Namibia Books took the risk of investing in Namibian writing but the returns were limited and, like many small, independent, publishers across Africa, we faced constraints in the areas of capital and capacity. I have written about this in more detail elsewhere (Katjavivi, 2002).

To promote sales in a country with literally a handful of bookshops, New Namibia Books opened its own shop in 1995 in the centre of Windhoek, concentrating on African books and literature, development and gender issues. It stocked New Namibia Books titles, the widest range of books on Namibia from other publishers inside and outside Namibia, children's books from many African countries, and a selection of women's writing from around the world. This increased sales but put extra demands on the staff.

A publisher needs an extensive backlist to bring in a regular income, as well as to develop new income-generating titles. Our main interests were in literature, life stories, history, democracy and human rights titles, but the investment of income from the science textbooks into these general titles did not bring sufficient returns to sustain the company.

A breakdown of the different types of books published by New Namibia Books in relation to income is instructive. The seven science textbooks constituted only 10 per cent of the total number of titles published. They required extensive editorial development and had to be revised as the syllabuses continued to be revised. Sales of these textbooks, however, generated the greater part of the company's income.

The scholarly books also constituted 10 per cent of the titles and also tied up publishing staff in editorial and production management. Even though copy-editing and printing costs were covered by the sponsoring partners, these books brought limited financial returns because their sales were slow.

Forty-one per cent of New Namibia Books titles were children's books, which brought in reasonable returns through sales to school and community libraries in Namibia, and to tourists. International sales were made through the African Books Collective and Book Aid International, which bought copies of these titles for school libraries across Africa through their Intra-African Book Scheme. Production and printing costs were, however, high because of the illustrations, especially when these were in four colours, and were not fully covered by the sponsoring partners.

Thirty-two per cent of the titles were general trade books which relied on small specific markets (such as the books for the National Assembly), or the general public. This group included literature and life stories. Again, library sales in Namibia and through the African Books Collective helped the sales of these titles. Production and printing costs were recovered over a period of a few years, but the sales did not generate significant levels of income.

New Namibia Books always stressed its commitment to working with authors, developing texts and developing writing, but this required significant editorial input and time, increased costs, and reduced profit from sales. We did not set a fixed profit margin, as large publishing companies such as Heinemann and Macmillan do. This meant that New Namibia Books ventured into publishing areas which other companies did not, such as the books published for the Namibia Oral Tradition Project. It also, however, meant that it had lower financial returns.

Of its general titles, New Namibia Books' best seller was Ellen Ndamhila's *The Price of Freedom*, which is still in print and available through Namibia Publishing House. The second best-selling title was David Lush's *Last Steps to Uhuru: an eye-witness account of Namibia's transition to independence*. Both Ndamhila and Lush marketed their books extensively themselves, and this helped to build sales.

It is clear that publishing more textbooks would have helped New Namibia Books to grow. Textbook development, however, demands the investment of financial and human resources, and bank loans are hard to come by unless you have guaranteed orders, which come only when books have been finalised and approved.

The New Namibia Books editorial staff also moved on to other things in 1998–99. The English Editor, Margie Orford, went to the USA to pursue graduate studies and was one of the editors of *Women Writing Africa. Volume I: The Southern Region*, published by the Feminist Press of New York. She is now a journalist and crime fiction writer, based in South Africa. (The setting for one of her novels, *Blood Rose*

(Orford, 2007), is the Namibian port of Walvis Bay and the crimes of the colonial period in Namibia are a factor in the murders.) The Science Editor, Nepeti Nicanor, completed a postgraduate Diploma in Publishing and became the Publisher at New Namibia Books. She later went for further studies in the field of public policy, and is working as a consultant.

My own involvement with the book sector NGOs which are active in Namibia and across the continent also often took me away from the management of New Namibia Books publishing and the bookshop.

SALE OF THE NEW NAMIBIA BOOKS LIST

By the end of the 1990s, the need for a further financial investment in New Namibia Books and our limited human resource capacity, made me decide to sell the publishing imprint and list. In 2000, I sold the New Namibia Books share of the rights to the science textbook courses to Heinemann, and the rest of the list and imprint name to Gamsberg Macmillan. I hoped that as the largest publisher in Namibia, Gamsberg Macmillan would keep the New Namibia Books titles in print, and some are still in print, some seventeen years later.

After the sale of the publishing name, the bookshop was renamed Onganda Y'Omambo. '*Onganda*' means 'home' in Otjiherero, and it was a conscious play on the use of the word '*omambo*' to mean Home of Books/Truth. Onganda Y'Omambo continued to operate until 2003 but keeping a bookshop going in Namibia's small market is also difficult. Its focus was perhaps too exclusively on African and Namibian titles for it to be sustainable, but that is another story. I have written more about it in my memoir *Undisciplined Heart* (Katjavivi, 2010).

After purchasing the list, Gamsberg Macmillan published seven more books under the New Namibia Books imprint (see Table 22.2 below).

Table 22.2 New Namibia Books titles published under Gamsberg Macmillan

Author	Title	Date	Partner
Dorian Haarhoff	<i>Goats, Oranges & Skeletons: A Trilogy of Namibian Independence Plays</i>	2000	
Terence Zeeman (ed.)	<i>New Namibian Plays Volume 1</i>	2000	Embassy of Finland, the Embassy of France and the Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre
Terence Zeeman (ed.)	<i>New Namibian Plays Volume 2</i>	2002	Embassy of Finland, the Embassy of France and the Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre
Terence Zeeman and James King	<i>Action! An Introductory Drama Manual</i>	2002	Embassy of Finland
Niels Erlank and Samuel V K Haakuria (eds.)	<i>24 Otjiherero Concert Songs</i>	2002	Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany

Table 22.2 (continued)

Author	Title	Date	Partner
Niels Erlank and Hans Eichab (eds.)	<i>24 Khoekhoegowab (Damara/Nama) Concert Songs</i> (2002)	2002	Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong	<i>Come Talk Your Heart: Performance poetry</i>	2005	Research Office of the University of Ulster and the Carl Schlettwein Foundation, Switzerland

The two books of concert songs, plus cassettes, were written and sung in Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab, and have a connection to older music traditions as well as the influences from the church and modern South African music. The books were accepted for publication by New Namibia Books before the sale of the list to Gamsberg Macmillan.

Gamsberg Macmillan went on to buy Out of Africa in the early 2000s. They changed their name to Macmillan Education Namibia, justifying this by saying that they were publishing under too many imprint names. In 2013, a subsidiary company called Namibia Publishing House was set up to continue, together with Macmillan Education Namibia, the publication of educational and trade titles for Namibia in English and the local languages.

THE LEGACY OF NEW NAMIBIA BOOKS

The New Namibia Books list told the Namibian story through children’s books, traditional stories, fiction, autobiography, social history, as well as more formal history, academic titles, and books defining and analysing the establishment of legal and democratic structures in the country.

The first Namibian literature course to be taught at the University of Namibia was made possible by the number of new titles from New Namibia Books. In 2001, *Coming on Strong* (Orford & Nicanor, 1996) and *Meekulu’s Children* (Hiyalwa, 2000) were two of the four set texts on the ‘Namibian literature in English since independence’ course reading list. *Tears Over the Deserts* (Kaujeua, 1994) and *The Price of Freedom* (Namhila, 1997) were two of five autobiographical texts, and *On the Run* (Victor, 1994) was one of four novels listed under the secondary reading section.

New writing published by New Namibia Books played an important role in remembering, naming and dealing with the painful past of colonial rule and the political struggle against it. The New Namibia Books publicity for *Meekulu’s Children* (Hiyalwa, 2000) explicitly stated:

This story reflects an important part of Namibian history. It is not easy reading for those who shared these experiences or those whose forces were responsible for inflicting fear and pain. However, the book’s value is specifically the telling and naming of these horrors. We do not have

a truth and reconciliation commission in Namibia, but we see through this book that a writer can tell the story, record it for all those who lived through these years, in memory of those who did not survive, and for the sake of the future children of Namibia, that they should not forget.

Launching *Meekulu's Children* in July 2000, the then Minister of Finance, Nangolo Mbumba, said:

One aspect of the process of building enduring peace and stability is to deal with the past. We have had some successes in transcending the past – in rising above the conflict, the oppression, and the injustices of the colonial period. But to really put the past behind us, we must not only rise above it, but also come to terms with it. To come to terms with it, we must know it, name it, and tell it as our history. Kaleni Hiyalwa's novel helps us to do just that. ... I, therefore, call on our fellow Namibian writers to tell the story of our people's pain and suffering and record it for the sake of our country's history and for the sake of Namibia's future generations.

In 'The Four Cs of Publishing: Capital, Capacity, Courage and Consequence' (Katjavivi, 2002, p. 36), I wrote: 'I had wanted to build a publishing institution that would last. ... I did not manage this. We did, however, publish a significant body of work. ... Some [of the books] will become classics, while others will educate and entertain for a while. All have served to show that Namibians are writing.'

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction to *The Stolen Water and Other Stories*, Jennifer Davis wrote: 'Story telling is older than history, because one of the basic human needs is to communicate feelings and experiences. Stories give pleasure and express the creative and spiritual self' (Davis, 1993, p. vii).

There are many more Namibian stories to be told and different voices to be heard but, despite the limited publishing and sales opportunities, Namibians have embarked on the written exploration of their past and present lives, and what the author of *The Moon People* described as 'the meaning of our struggle in this mean old desert'.

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About the editors

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Prof. Sarala Krishnamurthy is the former Dean of the Faculty of Human Sciences at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. She has taught at the post graduate level for 35 years and has published two books, *A reader's guide to Things Fall Apart* (1994) and *Stylistic analysis of Achebe and Ngugi's fiction* (2013). She started the Namibian English Teachers' Association in 2007 and has served on the National Theatre of Namibia as a board member. She has been working with the Continuing Professional Development Unit in the Ministry of Education to develop and administer the English Language Proficiency Programme since 2012. She is currently working on a major project on the compilation of Namibian English as part of the International Corpus of English, based at the University of Hong Kong.

Helen Vale

Helen Vale has taught literature at the University of Swaziland (four years) and the University of Namibia (16 years). She co-edited *Guardian of the Word, Association of University Teachers of Literature and Language* conference papers (1999) and has published articles in the *NAWA: Journal of Language and Communication* on Namibian poetry in English 1976–2006 (2009), *Namibian Development Journal* (with Dr V. Winterfeldt) on Encodings of Society in Namibian literature (2012), and a chapter on the new Namibian novel (with Prof. M. Zappen-Thomson and Dr C. Beuke-Muir) in the *Namibia Society Sociology* (2002). Her academic interests include Namibian literature in English since independence, linkages between history and literature, the role of memory and autobiography. She has served as a judge of plays competing for the Namibian Theatre and Film Awards for six years. She is Vice Chairperson of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), a local NGO. Since her retirement as senior lecturer from UNAM, Helen works as a freelance editor, trainer and consultant.

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Writing Namibia: Literature in Transition is a cornucopia of extraordinary and fascinating material which will entrance readers and be a rich resource for students and teachers. The text is wide ranging, defining literature in its broadest terms. The book, in its multifaceted approach, covers many genres traditionally outside academic literary discourse and debate, as well as issues of culture, history, politics and sociology. In a blend of styles, both Namibian and international scholars, writers and poets explore inter-linking themes, such as publishing in local languages, the development of applied theatre, cultural and gender stereotypes, violence, and post-colonial ideas regarding indigenous creative processes. The book is testimonial to the Namibian wellspring of talent, material, ideas and inspiration.

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*The strength of the book lies in its egalitarian and inclusive approach and the way it contextualizes the political archaeology of place, time and people. **Writing Namibia** restores balance in addressing silences around gender, race and orature.*

Dorian Haarhoff,

South African-Namibian writer and poet

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UNAM PRESS
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

ISBN 978-99916-42-33-8



9 789991 642338